

# Light on the Path for Awakening

Abbot George Burke  
Swami Nirmalananda Giri

© Copyright 2012 by Light of the Spirit Monastery

<http://ocoy.org>

# Light on the Path

## Part One

### **Introduction**

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, an Englishwoman named Mabel Collins was inspired to record teachings on the beginnings of the spiritual quest in a small book called *Light On The Path*. She did not consider herself the author but only the transmitter. Therefore she insisted that the title page say: "Written down by M. C." In the following commentary we will be carefully analyzing her inspired transcription, for those who would make the Great journey must know both the path and how to travel upon it.

Miss Collins writes of discipleship and the qualities of a worthy disciple. The Master of such a disciple is the disciple's own divine Self which draws its existence from the Supreme Self: God. Some time after writing *Light on the Path* Mabel Collins came into the orbit of those that claimed to be disciples of hidden Masters, both physical and disembodied. They even told her that her book had really been psychically dictated to her by one of their Masters. Innocently she accepted this and was put on probation to eventually become a disciple of the "Masters." This probation lasted less than twenty-four hours, for she realized that she was being led away from the Path, that God and the Soul alone are anyone's Masters. She severed her connections with those "disciples" and went her way in her former freedom. It is good to keep this in mind when reading *Light on the Path*.

### **I. These rules are written for all disciples: Attend you to them.**

**Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears. Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness. Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters it must have lost the power to wound. Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.**

*These rules are written for all disciples.* What is a disciple? The Greek word *mathetes* which is translated "disciple" in English means "one who is learning." Many study and many experience, but few learn. A disciple is one who does. A disciple is also one who is undergoing discipline—that is, he is not living by his whim, but according to the guidelines set forth by the wise of all ages. They are rules—a word base on the Latin *regula*, from which we get the word "regulate" which means to control, to rule something—in this case our own lower nature, mind, and intellect. So the path of the disciple is the path of discipline. It is also the path of obedience in the sense of free acquiescence to the counsels of the wise, but it is not the fearful slavishness usually demanded by the forces of the world—religious, economic, political, or otherwise.

The path of spiritual discipleship is rigorous and requires an equally rigorous preparation. Let us begin a prudent accounting of all the "costs" of discipleship.

*Discipline.* We do not much like that. Everyone talks about wanting to learn from Masters, but the only people that are allowed within the orbit of the Masters are disciples. And they are disciples on the Masters' terms, not their own. Disciples are those who actively follow a regimen of self-purification to clarify their minds and thus make themselves capable of receiving higher knowledge. They must prepare themselves so that when they are given wisdom they will both recognize it and be able

to apply it.

Disciples are not spiritual weekenders—or as one friend of mine called them: “Sunday evening metaphysicians.” Nor are the rules we are about to consider written for them, but for true disciples—those who intend to devote their life to the search for higher consciousness.

Saying that “these rules are written for all disciples” means that there are absolutely no exceptions to them. We are always looking for shortcuts or the easy way, but such things do not exist in this realm of highest truth. Secular education abounds with those who want to be squeaked by somehow, to be passed though they do not deserve it. These are the kind that in high school and college always asked the teacher first thing: “Do you grade on the curve?” Remember them? But that cannot be in the school of divine discipleship. What is “written” is written for all.

*Attend you to them.* The will is the most important factor in the makeup of any evolving entity. It is the supreme power wielded by the evolving individual.

### **Free will**

“Free will” is freely spoken of, but a truly free will is rare indeed, and not to be had for the mere wishing or talking. The basic requisite of the disciple is the freeing and empowering of his will. This is done through discipline and obedience that are not imposed upon the disciple but freely and willingly taken up, that are acts of will rather than surrendering of will. To be truly freeing, discipline and obedience can spring solely from one motivation: the attainment of divine consciousness. Therefore they cannot be engaged in from either fear of pain and punishment or hope of reward. Nor should they be taken up because of having become intellectually convinced or emotionally cajoled by any external force—including ego, emotions, intellects, or desires. The disciple must come to know and understand the rules. From that moment on the following of those rules must be a spontaneous response arising from his own Self—from nowhere else, and from nothing else whatsoever.

The real spiritual Masters leave their pupils free to follow wisdom or not. Neither with words nor with silence do they seek to influence them. For true freedom—the freedom of the spirit—this is a requisite. That is why in the closing section of the Gita, Krishna says to Arjuna: “Now I have taught you that wisdom which is the secret of secrets. Ponder it carefully. Then act as you think best” (Bhagavad Gita 18:63).

### **Inner peace and control**

*Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears.* Tears are expressions of intense and uncontrolled emotional reaction to something. They occur when people are happy, sad, frustrated, or overwhelmed by some experience. They can result from experiencing great beauty or great repulsion. So what is really being talked about here is being overcome by egoic reactions, which are symbolized by tears. The Master is not ordering us to become emotionless, but to always be masters of our emotions, to never let ourselves be carried away by them. Otherwise our minds will be confused and our intelligence clouded. As Krishna warns in the Gita: “Confuse your mind, you forget the lesson of experience; forget experience, you lose discrimination; lose discrimination, and you miss life’s only purpose” (Bhagavad Gita 2:63).

We are not to become emotionless zombies. There are those who read about how the world is “unreal” and we must be “detached.” Trying to realize this ideal they become emotionally unresponsive and dead. I have known people who would not show affection to their own spouses or children because they feared “negative attachment.” This rule is not advocating that unnatural fanaticism. It is not advocating the

eradication of love, compassion, mercy, generosity, and such like, but the eradication of selfishness and its emotional tempests—either from pleasure or displeasure. We cannot possibly maintain the life of the disciple until we have become actually incapable of this egoic type of response. Now that is a very high ideal—a rather bitter ideal, actually, since most of us like to indulge our egoic emotions, considering that to do so gives us “character.” Therefore we are in the grip of this egoic response.

There is also a higher meaning to being “incapable of tears.” We must become incapable of being hurt or grieved by anything upon this earth—of reacting to external objects (which include a lot that we consider internal) with sorrow, disappointment, disgust, frustration, or grief. In other words, the negativity of this world must not move us to respond in kind. Especially we must never feel helpless and frustrated by the nightmares shown us in the dream-theater we mistakenly call “the real world.” In other words, we must become unmoved by the false appearances of material existence—not from emotional deadness but from knowledge of their fundamental unreality.

We must become incapable of being swept away by seemingly positive reactions to earthly phenomena, as well, for human beings often shed “tears of joy” as well as sorrow. In short, we must become unmoved by the ever-shifting scenes of this earthly dream-existence, and become anchored in the peace and joy of the Spirit.

There is another aspect to this. Tears distort the vision and blind the eyes. Tears come between the eye, the organ of perception, and whatever should be perceived. So we are being warned that unless we have entered this “tearless” state there is a chance that as we pursue the divine vision our inner eye may have its vision blotted out or distorted by the intervention of these “tears” between us and that which is true.

There is an ancient story of a prince who upon becoming king was visited by a sage who gave him a ring upon which were engraved the words: “Even This Must Pass Away.” Throughout his life, when he would be about to be overcome by elation, desire, anger, or sadness, and thus “lose himself,” his eyes would light upon those words and he would immediately regain the right perspective and remain calm. Then, at the moment of his death he was fearless as he gazed upon the assurance that: “Even This Must Pass Away.”

### **Right awareness**

*Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness.* We are not to become deaf—our inner ear must be able to hear, but it should hear only one thing: the voice of the spirit. But to become sensitive to the voice of higher consciousness we must become insensitive to extraneous things, to stop being responsive to material life and the resultant material consciousness. That is, we must perfectly—that is, intelligently—disregard it.

This is especially true in the matter of social consciousness or “peer pressure.” There are people who would go to lingering death rather than transgress social rules or be thought ill of by those around them. People are far more afraid of looking bad than they are of actually being bad. Especially in modern times other people’s eyes are the mirrors that determine how we come to see ourselves. For this reason Sri Ramakrishna often told His disciples that those who were subject to fear and shame could never know God.

Those who are “in step with the times” are naturally out of step with eternity. Those who are influenced by every worldly wind and tide are beyond the sphere of divine communication. Those who are always fully “up” on all the latest fashion, verbal jargon, events, fads, trends, and interests are the high priests and priestesses of world-worship.

Contemporary religion is poisoned with this sensitivity and reflexive responsiveness to any earthly absurdity. Some years back we used to get a monthly newsletter from a spiritual group in Texas. One day a tiny item appeared in our local newspaper about women in the East deciding that they wanted to be called “Ms.” Within the week the newsletter came filled with Ms. here and Ms. there. It was obvious they had completely retyped the copy to accommodate such nonsense without even waiting to see if it would catch on. The secular masters (mistresses in this case, I suppose) had whistled, and like well-trained dogs they had come to heel. Being aliens to the world of spirit, this material earth is the only world such persons know or care about, so they bend into conformity at every wind that blows over it. The Beloved Disciple had it right when he wrote: “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (I John 4:5).

Our ears must be attuned only to the voice of wisdom. Only then are we really free. We can have no standards other than those of spiritual life if we would succeed in the life of the spirit. This includes being unresponsive to our own lower nature and responsive only to our higher, divine Self. It also includes our refusal to be controlled by supposed duties or obligations originating in the world and the ego and instead looking upon the things of the spirit alone as mandatory.

### **Evasion**

Many people use their supposed obligations and worldly responsibilities to neglect or altogether abandon spiritual life. Yet in an instant they throw over those earthly ties to fulfill personal and material desires or ambitions. This is especially true in family life. These individuals pretend to be morally enslaved to children, spouse, or parents—especially if those relatives do not like their spiritual activities. They make quite a production of how they cannot be so heartless as to upset them or spoil their relationship by doing something objectionable, or how afraid they are of their displeasure and censure. But if you can spend some time with them you will find them snapping orders at these very people, and constantly hurting them with complete callousness. Still, when spiritual life comes up they begin to figuratively limp around and whine as though they were under the total domination of those they use as an excuse. And woe to those who indicate that such “obligations” are not legitimate reasons to slack off, for they will be denounced as heartless monsters who want them to hurt their loved ones or break up their familial harmony. It is also true that there are those who refuse to fulfill their legitimate obligations under the cloak of “spirituality.” This is perhaps even more despicable.

There are also those that play a double game of deception and irresponsibility. They neglect their duties to their families and livelihood under the pretense that they are devoting their time to spiritual life. Then they neglect their spiritual duties under the pretense that they are having to fulfill their obligations to their families—a neat trick that often succeeds in bamboozling both sides, each thinking that the other is the cause of their neglect, while both are being shirked.

The disciple must avoid all these excuses and pitfalls.

### **The requisites**

*Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters it must have lost the power to wound.* The voice—which is much more than just words, being also thought and will—must lose the power to injure either ourselves or others through misapplication, falsehood, evil-speaking, slander, insult, cruelty, or harshness, or the desire to injure verbally. It also includes trying to manipulate other people. The very capacity for

negative speaking must be eliminated.

*Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.* “Stand” means to be established in a definite position, to be bold and firm. Therefore the blood of the heart has to be shed. The heart must be opened and its blood poured out just as Saint Mary Magdalene poured the sweet perfume on the head of Jesus (Matthew 26:6, 7).

You can bleed from other places and survive, but if you pierce open the heart and it bleeds, you are on the way to death. So we are being exhorted to purify ourselves through the martyrdom of the ego. Just as the Mayans cut out the heart of victims and offered them in sacrifice, so we must cut out the ego to right away strike at the very thing that has been keeping us running away from God throughout so many lives. We must cut out our own heart, so to speak. We must shed our own blood. But when we do so we shall not die but live, for we shall discover that the ego is not our “heart” after all, but that our true heart is our immortal spirit. We will find our life is not in the “blood” of egotism, but in God. So our seeming suicide will really be our resurrection.

False identity has so gripped us that only by such drastic means will we be freed. “When the ‘I’ shall die, then shall I know who am I.” Sad to say, many people start out in spiritual life and then quit when it becomes a little bit inconvenient, troublesome, embarrassing, uncomfortable, or difficult. But disciples must be otherwise.

To this end we must give our heart’s blood, to unreservedly pour out the very essence of our life which, as already said, will then be seen to not have been our life at all, for we shall then come to know God as our life. What a joyous prospect!

### **1. Kill out ambition.**

It is ego-based ambition that is being spoken of here. We must not merely suppress such ambition, we must annihilate it. Obviously the worthy disciple has worthy goals which he attempts to realize. What is prohibited is ambition in the sense of wanting to gain some position or object which will please the short-sighted ego. To believe that any gain or position in the external material world is of lasting value is in itself a terrible delusion and is sure to produce conflict in spiritual life, for the attitudes requisite for (egoic) success in the material and in the spiritual planes are opposite in character.

One side of this proscription is actually practical, even in an earthly sense, for it also means that a person should not overreach himself but “live within his means” materially, intellectually, and spiritually. According to this view bigger is not better, and continual unrestrained growth is not progress. This is the terrible tiger we are riding today. There is a constant clamoring for increase of “the gross national product,” etc. Although the Law of Diminishing Returns is well known as a theory, no one is applying it on a large scale to economic and social growth. Therefore our economy is like the bullfrog that kept puffing itself up more and more until it exploded. This constant pressure for “advancement,” for “bigger and better,” is a terrible roller coaster that is sure to dump us eventually, and in between we suffer terrible anxieties.

Ambition as the desire for adulation from others is also delusive. Ambition for material gain stems from the delusion that the more we have the more we are—it is a matter of false self-identity. Ambition for notoriety springs from the mistaken idea that we are what other people think of us. In other words, anything that gives an egoic adulation, or an egoic satisfaction, produces a false identity. The one identity we should have is that we are a disciple, one who is treading the path toward the Real.

Ambition is an indication that the individual does not know his real nature, but is struggling to establish a false self-concept. The effect of this is that he works to

become something imaginary in his own eyes, rather than to manifest the reality of his divine nature. He wants to “become” something in the world, to have a flattering label applied to him. Such persons have very little interior personal development but are a shallow bundle of “interpersonal skills.” These people become the leaders of even shallower people.

### **“Leaders”**

In the university I did a study on personality aspects and was given access to the records of psychological tests given to the students. This included the records of the class officers and various “big” men and women on campus. The tests showed consistently that the leaders and the “socially skilled” were far less developed interiorly (self-image, emotional stability, etc.) than was normal. On the other hand, those whose scores indicated very high self-development consistently scored below normal in socially-oriented areas. It was most revealing. The leaders and “great guys” all had extremely low self-esteem, therefore they needed others to tell them something about themselves that they did not even believe. Those who were emotionally stable simply did not need to manipulate others into assuring them of what they already knew about themselves—ergo, they were “socially unskilled.” From this it became evident that “social skills” meant methods of manipulation, not genuine friendliness or the ability to really care about others. In contrast, the “dreamboats” on campus used others as mere echo chambers, mirrors in which they admired their own (self-disliked) faces. “How skilled human beings are in their ignorance,” Yogananda often marveled.

My study also revealed that the “leaders” were really followers—that is, they were simply jackanapes, monkeys on a string that gained popularity by merely feeding to their admirers what they wanted to see and hear. At the other end of the spectrum were those who needed no such “other direction,” but like the wise of all ages could in truth “Know, Will, Dare, and Be Silent.” Being highly developed inwardly, they scored low on the social side because they were not into running other people. They were not crude in their behavior or without friends, but they were centered in living their own life, and being alive inside.

All this relates to the subject of ambition, because ambition includes being involved in building up an outer shell to identify with, as do all the “other directed” type of people. And this type of involvement actually draws on our inward being, draining it, causing it to become minimal if not outright nonexistent. Those who pursue this mode of life are left empty by busily creating an external image of themselves which is no more than a hollow idol in the creation of which they have lost their souls.

### **Spiritual ambition**

Now, not only is earthly ambition to be eliminated, so also must spiritual ambition. This is for more than one reason, but the most obvious is simply because in religion earthly and personal ambition always masquerade as spiritual. We especially see this in the Western monastic foundations where the members are supposedly vowed to poverty. They frequently amass fantastic wealth (one order owns much of the coast of California) under the excuse that none of it is “personal.” Nevertheless the members are seen to live in incredible luxury. I personally know of one order of “strict poverty” in which six members had ten cars between them—all Lincoln Continentals and Cadillacs. Moreover, it was an “enclosed” order, which meant that they were never to leave the property. Their lawn (not the total property, only the lawn) was one hundred and forty-five acres in size, and required hired men to maintain it. And this was one of the smallest of the orders in this country. In the mid-sixties another very small order



was found to be worth over eight million dollars, held mostly by dummy corporations so no one would know it. Around the same time a small order of nuns—also vowed to strict poverty—was so wealthy that the head of the order loaned one of her cousins over four million dollars without it even being detected in their finances. It was literally part of “petty cash”! When the order’s accounts were going to be audited, she demanded the money back, as it had been loaned without anyone knowing of it. The cousin could not pay it back. The auditors discovered the affair, but the order did not sue since they did not want the public to learn the extent of the assets held by such orders who capitalized on their supposed poverty to get big donations. But there was a leak, and it was written up in newspapers and magazines nationwide.

I know of two monasteries that are worth over a million dollars each in assets. The monks do live a plain, even ascetic life, but there is no excuse for such aggrandizement of worldly goods. Yet they and the others I have mentioned would all argue that it is for the glory of God and His “work”—of which they obviously have a very materialistic concept.

### **Pride**

On a more metaphysical level, spiritual ambition is often an indication of pride. Once a doctor from France told me that as a young man he had read Vivekananda’s book *Raja Yoga*. Instructions are given there for a regimen of intensive spiritual discipline with the statement that those who engage in such a routine for six months will attain a definite degree of spiritual development. When my friend read that he said to himself: “Ho! if it takes an Indian six months, I can do it in six weeks!” He had no idea of how egotistical such an idea was. But in later years when he was a real disciple he looked back on that incident with amusement at such blind arrogance.

Often when people read books on spiritual life, especially lives of great saints and masters, they are attracted to the glamorous phenomena and imagine themselves being so powerful or so admired. It is not real spiritual life that is attracting them at all. As a result, they may try a little spiritual practice, but they give it up early on when it does not produce the thrills, chills, and overnight glory they expected.

During my first trip to India I met a great Master, Sitaramdas Omkarnath. Just to be in his presence was so purifying and blessed that I knew he was great. A man who was with me formed the same opinion, but on a much different basis—he rhapsodized over how many rich and important people had been there showing respect to the saint! “Just think,” he kept saying to me, “a Brigadier General in the Indian Army showed him such respect. He must be really great!”

When we read of the Great Ones our egos tend to blind us to the great sacrifices and discipline required of them to reach their high level, and we only think of the miracle-working or the notoriety gained. Forgetting the “price,” we aspire to be saints as well. But the truth is, we are not interested in being saints, we are only interested in having their notoriety and glory. Saint Seraphim of Sarov is very popular because he shone with light, floated in the air, and cured sickness. But very few want to undergo the tremendous struggles and hardships that were the refining fires in which his spiritual gold was made pure. They forget his persecutions by fellow monks, his physical illnesses, and the occasions when he nearly died from injuries, both natural and from evil men. Also they forget his decades of strict solitude, never leaving his room or speaking to others. Yet those things are the realities of his sanctity, for they reveal his desire and love for God. Spiritual ambition, being based on egotism, breeds impatience in spiritual practice, whereas Christ Jesus told us: “In your patience possess ye your souls (Luke 21:19). Yogananda often said: “A saint is a sinner who never gave

up.”

## **2. Kill out desire of life.**

It is hard to speak more plainly or more drastically than this. First, this means to kill out all desire for our mistaken ideas of what constitutes life. How often we hear people speak about “really living,” when they are actually only diverting themselves from life through frenetic activities.

Whatever our erroneous definitions of life may be, they have one thing in common, from the coarsest to the most sophisticated, subtle, and even philosophical: they consist of becoming absorbed in objective consciousness. And that absorption constitutes death in the form of the loss of subjective consciousness—real Self-consciousness.

Life being spiritual in essence, it must be a state of full and unimpaired internal awareness. This does not mean that being alive means to be in some kind of perpetual trance, unaware of the external world. Rather, it means to move and function easily and competently amidst all outer conditions and objects while at the same time maintaining perfect interior awareness. The truly alive person is unshakably centered in the center of his being, his pure consciousness or spirit, while at the same time working out his evolution through interaction with the environment produced by his individual karmas. It is the difference between swimming in the ocean and drowning in it.

So to kill out the desire of life means to free ourselves from all illusions regarding its constitution. It is not an exhortation to become a zombie or automaton—just the opposite. By freeing ourselves from mistaken definitions of life we can then begin to discover the truth of its nature. We are not told kill out desire *for* life, but desire *of* life—the many delusive desires that our misperceptions of life produce in us. For what is “life” as we presently experience it? It is this moving picture of ever-changing conditions that surrounds us. Although it is meant to be an instrument of teaching, a kind of grand-scale “training film,” it still is basically an illusion. To reach out into the illusion in the vain hope of taking something to ourselves that will either satisfy or really change us is just that: a vain hope.

When I was a little child I had a really silly delusion. I believed that if I saw something in a dream that I wanted (and I always knew when I was dreaming), I need only hold on to it tightly as I sensed myself awakening and I could bring it out of the dream and into my waking life. To a child of the 'forties, Woolworth's Dime Store was a paradise. Often I would dream I was in Woolworth's and able to take anything I wanted. I would wander around, picking out various items, carrying them with me. Then as I felt myself awakening, I would hold on to them, pressing them tightly to my chest. When awake, I would look to see if I had succeeded, but would always be disappointed. “You can't take it with you” is true in all dreams. And since to be “in the spirit” is to be awake, it therefore follows that we cannot bring anything of the earthly dream-world into it.

### **The big snare**

The various external objects we encounter in life are like bait, and the desire for them is the hook that catches us, the unwary fish that try to “swallow” them and somehow assimilate them into our lives. We are pulled out of ourselves and suffocated like the hapless fish. The truth about earthly life is that it steals us—we do not steal it. It possesses us rather than our possessing it. Those who believe they have gained so much in life have actually become enslaved, for they are owned by those things.

This world is like the tar baby of Uncle Remus. When we grab for it, we stick to it.

Then it seizes us and whirls us around to wherever it wants us to go. But we can be so deluded that we think we are doing it all ourselves. The world seizes us, shapes us into its own image and pushes us around just like puppets, and all the while we brag about our free will.

Will Cuppy, the humorist and historian, said that in ancient Athens the people thought they were living in a democracy because Pericles said so. "He only told them what to do," comments Cuppy. The world becomes our Pericles, assuring and flattering us that we are free. As the Goblin King says in *Labyrinth*: "Surrender to me and I will be your slave." But being in this state, constantly stimulated and motivated by external forces, is truly being without a soul.

Once Sri Ramakrishna saw a cow tied by a rope to a stake in the ground. He remarked to those with Him that the cow was just like most human beings. It could move in the limited circle and chew on the grass so it thought it was free, although all the time it was tied. As human beings we do not realize that we are limited by being tied to material existence. Only by removing the rope can we be truly free.

### **A great delusion**

Perhaps the most important aspect of the directive to kill out desire of life is the cutting off of the delusion that external objects can change our nature, making us something other than what we are in our essential and eternal nature. Although we can make objects come into our temporary life sphere, since all relative existence is based on duality the very coming implies an eventual going. Whatever is gained must eventually be lost—getting implies losing. Therefore nothing can ever become "ours" in any real sense at all. This is not only true of the physical, but of the subtle worlds and levels of our being as well. The "desires of life" proceed from a false identity and a false self-concept. To realize who and what we really are we must clear aside the veils of these desire-illusions.

Finally, we need to notice that the rule implies that we have the ability to kill out desire of life—that it is not something beyond our strength or capacity. Also, the command is not to deny, turn from, or reject desire of life, but to destroy it. That is because if we do not destroy it, it will arise to hinder us in the future.

Since both desire and ambition usually manifest through action, let us consider action itself. The basic problem with action is our inability to act without the idea: "I am doing this." As a consequence there is no action, however small, that cannot become an egoic trap for us. Thus, every moment of our life we run the risk of egoic illusion, of taking any action, however insignificant, and making it seem significant, using it as an avenue for egotism. Moreover, other people are usually involved in all our actions, even if only in the capacity of observers who are going to pass judgement on the action. And this automatically calls forth egoic reactions on our part.

We are especially sensitive to the opinions of others regarding our deeds. Whether it is criticism or praise from others, the ego becomes hooked by it and begins to react. So then, how do we act in discharging our duties, etc.? Actually, the solution is quite simple: it is a matter of placement of consciousness. If we are centered in our (lower) selves or in the action we shall surely fall into the delusions of egotism. But if our consciousness is centered in God, the Sole Doer, then we shall be safe. What is more, we will do our work much better than otherwise! This has been observed through the ages. Those who keep their minds on God as they go about their daily routine are seen to do everything much better than those who get lost in self-involvement or "work consciousness."

### **3. Kill out desire of comfort.**

This needs to be done on all levels: physical, psychological, and spiritual. By “comfort” is meant ease. On the physical level it includes luxury. But the main idea is the desire for comfort in the sense of everything being easy and without effort. We must kill out such a desire because the spiritual path is not easy. The moment struggle ceases, at that moment life and evolution cease. The road does in truth wind uphill all the way—yes, to the very end.

Since we get whatever we want, if we desire spiritual ease we will get it. But it will be spiritual stagnation, as well. Spiritual life is not for a person who wants to find peace in the sense of a lack of struggle. Spiritual life is really a very ruthless and relentless war. Only when there is total victory is there peace and cessation from “troubles.” Only after long battles do we gain the ultimate peace of liberation.

In a war the good soldier lays his whole life “on the line.” There is no other way to fight worthily. He who would save his life by holding back or evading conflict and sacrifice shall lose it. But he who gives up his life in total dedication to the endeavor shall find his life and save it. No price is too high. Those who have their “top price” beyond which they will not go will eventually reach it and fall by the way.

Contentment is not for the disciple. Rather, he must be seized with divine discontent, desiring to strive ever onward and upward, ceasing not until the Goal is fully won. Those who demand assurance that they will be successful, or who insist that someone hold their hand and comfort them, telling them that all will be well, that it will be worth it, can only fail in spiritual life. For really their problem is that they do not really want spiritual life at all. They only curious idlers. The same is true of those who constantly demand explanations and justifications of the requirements and disciplines of spiritual life. Those who must be wheedled and coaxed are thoroughly unworthy. And those who demand special concessions and special treatment should not even be considered.

#### **Ever moving**

We must always be stirred up to action and “hopping on the griddle” like a drop of water. Otherwise we will stagnate and die. We are like the fish that must keep moving otherwise they will suffocate. So there can be no wish for ease and comfort. “Comfortable” religion is the worst possible thing we can get caught up in. Real religion discomfits us and gets us moving on to God. Also, since spiritual life involves struggle and (seeming) sacrifice, those who demand comfort will condition themselves to reject spiritual life.

As with the other things that must be cut off, the desire for comfort stems from the belief that peace and satisfaction are external conditions. By weaning ourselves from these delusions we come to understand that all we are looking for outside ourselves is to be found within. And when we quit looking for these things from an outside source we will be enabled to find what we want—and more—within.

We are constantly externalizing our consciousness in order to perceive and relate to the outside world. We must now reverse the process in order to develop internal perceptions. And then do you know what we will discover? We will find that instead of losing awareness of the outer world we will come to see it with a clarity heretofore undreamed of. In fact, we will come to perceive it perfectly. And this is because the outer proceeds from the inner—in fact, it is a reflection of the inner reality. That is the secret! But only those who are willing to turn within discover the mystery. Only those who are willing to give it all up, to sacrifice it, will really gain it. All others will spend their lives grasping for it only to eventually be swept away on the tide of death and lose

everything (which they never really had, anyway, such is the cruel irony).

**4. Work as those work who are ambitious. Respect life as those who desire it. Be happy as those are who live for happiness.**

**Seek in the heart the source of evil and expunge it. It lives fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple as well as in the heart of the man of desire. Only the strong can kill it out. The weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death. And it is a plant that lives and increases throughout the ages. It flowers when the man has accumulated unto himself innumerable existences. He who will enter upon the path of power must tear this thing out of his heart. And then the heart will bleed, and the whole life of the man seem to be utterly dissolved. This ordeal must be endured: it may come at the first step of the perilous ladder which leads to the path of life: it may not come until the last. But, O disciple, remember that it has to be endured, and fasten the energies of your soul upon the task. Live neither in the present nor the future, but in the eternal. This giant weed cannot flower there: this blot upon existence is wiped out by the very atmosphere of eternal thought.**

*Work as those work who are ambitious.* This is a most important principle, since many people think that in spiritual life we must turn into jellyfish. But we must work, for it is our karma to engage in various actions. And by so doing we free ourselves from the bonds of karma. If we avoid those actions, however, then the karma must be fulfilled in a future time—even a future life. There is no escape! However, since it is our karma that certain actions must be fulfilled, we should work at them very well—but without ambition. Notice that the directive is to work as those who have ambition. In other words, we have no ambition, but we must work as skillfully and energetically as if we did—not carelessly or irresponsibly.

This applies to spiritual life, as well. We must not have spiritual ambition—this also is a delusion—but we must work at it as steadily and doggedly as if we did. We continually see how dedicated and willing to struggle and sacrifice are those who have worldly ambition. We must observe and learn from them, for since the material world reflects the spiritual world, the same rules apply in both. We must have the same drive—but for spiritual life.

We must expend all our energies in the pursuit of spiritual perfection. When Sri Ramakrishna asked one of His teachers if He was mad, she answered: “My son, some people are mad for the world, and you are mad for God.” So great must our intensity be that we may truly be said to be “cracked” on divine life. There is no place for cowardly or lazy “moderation” in this ideal.

### **Salt and sugar**

By fulfilling even our non-spiritual tasks as well as we can, we are fitting ourselves for success in spiritual life. As Sri Ramakrishna often said: “If you can weigh salt, you can weigh sugar.” That is, if you are proficient in one kind of life you will be skilled in the other. And since we usually cannot see the inner realms of the spirit, we can use our outer life as a barometer of the spirit. For the principle “as above so below” applies here as well. As Jesus said: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). If we are careless or incompetent in our physical work, we are deficient in our inner work. When a person cannot even walk a straight line, you know that he cannot think in a straight line, either. Only the lazy and the fake would have us think otherwise. If we cannot scrape a carrot, trim off the ends, cut it up, and boil it, how then are we possibly going

to do such an amazing thing as expand our consciousness to an infinite capacity? If we cannot water a house plant, what will we do in spiritual life? If the mind cannot do such a simple thing, then higher life is impossible.

One sign of correct meditation is the developing of the ability to function in material life. As we become spiritually effective and efficient—so do we in the outer life as well. At one period in her life Madame Blavatsky successfully started a series of businesses—including an ink factory! She would begin a business, develop it into a success, and then sell it and begin another. Her relatives thought she was a fool, but she was doing it all as an exercise in spiritual life. By so doing she demonstrated her spiritual proficiency and set the example for those who would aspire to her level of attainment. No one could accuse her of not being able to make her way in the world. Just before coming to America she completed a successful tour through Russia and Europe as a concert pianist under the stage name of “Madame Laura”!

*Respect life as those who desire it.* Life is not to be despised, including the life of earthly incarnation. Quite the opposite, it is to be respected and valued because it is a teacher. It must be preserved and cared for. This applies to the life of others, as well. We often say that this world is like a motion picture—just the play of light and shadow upon the screen of universal consciousness. But we do not disdain it, for it is an “educational film.” Therefore we must pay close attention to it and take its message very seriously. We must apply ourselves to it as though it were real, while retaining the awareness of its evanescent dream nature. Those who believe it is real are the ones who fail. The only ones who can really succeed are those who know that it is unreal and go ahead and apply themselves to it with the divine perspective. Thus the divine energies and divine intelligence within begin to manifest in the life of the individual. This is the secret of success in life.

### **Attitude**

So then, life in all its aspects is not to be desired, but it is to be respected. It is to be taken seriously without believing in it for a moment, just as we would seriously help a child work through an imaginary problem. It would be a mistake to refuse to help the child even though the problem is nonexistent, and equally a mistake to become like the child in thinking that there is a real problem. Our approach seemingly must be contradictory.

In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna points out to Arjuna that He works ceaselessly yet is never attached to anything. “Consider me: I am not bound by any sort of duty. There is nothing, in all the three worlds, which I do not already possess; nothing I have yet to acquire. But I go on working, nevertheless” (Bhagavad Gita 3:22). So it must be with us who are reflections of God. God creates and maintains the world, yet at no time is drawn into it or caught in it. Never is He controlled or conditioned or affected by it, since He is its Source and knows that eventually it is to be dissolved. Creation responds to God, but God does not respond to creation though absolutely intent on it. Since we are learning to be consciously united with God and share His life and consciousness (the two are really one), this is part of the learning process, of practicing how to participate in the Being of God.

This is also why it is folly to seek to end the cycle of birth and death until we have mastered the lessons inherent in the cycle. The desire of the student should not be to merely stop attending school but to learn and graduate and thereby end the need to attend school.

Much as we should desire to return to the Source we should not desire to end incarnate existence—either here or in the higher worlds—until we have fully developed

the capacities that the incarnate condition is intended to produce. It is senseless to abandon the class until the lesson is learned. Therefore life must be engaged in without ever being involved in it.

*Be happy as those are who live for happiness.* Living for happiness is a spontaneous, completely natural way of living in the happiness (bliss–ananda) that is really the essential nature of existence itself. Those who seek happiness artificially are never really happy, because they think that happiness comes from an external result or from a physical condition, whereas there is no real contentment to be derived from an external object. This is because all external objects are material—even if astral or causal matter—and we are exclusively spiritual in nature. Therefore contentment can only be found in the spirit. Neither material nor psychological objects can satisfy us, for we are neither body nor mind. It is an especially deadly delusion to equate pleasure with happiness

To reach outward for happiness is to eventually be disappointed and therefore suffer. Instead, we must be happy inwardly, resting in the divine perfection of our inner Self, the immortal spirit. Happiness is within because the spirit is within. We already are perfectly at ease, in balance, in harmony, at rest, and contented—but only in the spirit. In one sense we are not happy—we are happiness itself, just as we are not conscious, we are consciousness itself, we are not alive, we are life itself. Happiness is dwelling in the consciousness that is the Self. Otherwise we will be like the musk deer that smells the fragrance emanating from its own body and rushes around wildly, exhausting itself in the search for the source of the perfume. How many of us have searched for an item of clothing we were already wearing or looked for an object that was right in our hand? So it is with happiness, indeed with life itself in its fulness.

*Seek in the heart the source of evil and expunge it.* That is only intelligent policy, isn't it? False spiritual life is that which neither has nor is intended to have any lasting positive effect on the individual. The ego produces it in infinite variety whatever the religious tradition. But all the varieties have a common denominator—they do not actually remove the source of evil from the individual consciousness. The symptoms of evil may be momentarily hidden or suppressed, but the evil itself is not removed by false “seeking.”

Just as incompetent medicine pays attention to the symptoms only and not to the disease that is the source of the symptoms, so does ignorant religion in the spiritual realm. And just as modern medicine often treats only the symptoms with the mistaken premise that if the symptoms disappear the disease has been removed, so also does its spiritual counterpart, ignorant religion. Ignorant religion also engages in the production of artificial “positive” behavior with the idea that you are what you act like you are—that if you can manage to glitter you have thereby become gold!

One of the reasons such delusive religion sells so well throughout the world is that it keeps the consciousness confined to the superficial levels of external consciousness where no real change is possible. To maintain its dominion over us, the ego is determined that we shall not have interior awareness. For the thing that the ego fears the most is interior awakening. Therefore it leads the seeker into illusory byways. Some evil people go into an absolute tailspin the moment they hear that someone wants to practice meditation. They begin to throw all kinds of verbal bombs at the poor aspirant, screeching that meditation is selfish, impractical, and such like. Their overreaction tells us that they are afraid of meditation because inner consciousness strikes at the very root of the evil to which they are polarized.

## **Essential insight**

It is essential to realize that the root of evil is inside our mind, not in the outer world or in our body, though they are popular scapegoats in false spiritual systems. Therefore a person cannot possibly get rid of evil until he has penetrated into his heart, into the center of his own being, and mastered the capacity to live and be centered there—to be established in that consciousness. How is it that the expression “source of evil” is used when the wise tell us that evil does not exist, but is only a corruption of the good? Notice that the Master does not say: “Get rid of evil,” but “Get rid of the source of evil.” In other words, evil in the form of negative thoughts or actions is a symptom of the presence of this thing.

What is this deadly thing? It is the consciousness of existence separate from God—which of course is a delusion, for we are never separate from God Who is our very Existence. Since God is All in All, we are ever one with Him, the sense of separation being utterly false, a form of spiritual insanity. And that sense of separation is a primal delusion located at the center of our awareness like an obstruction in the eye that blocks or distorts the vision. It causes us to say: “I and God are two” instead of: “I and the Father are one.” As the Upanishad says: “He who thinks: ‘I am one and God is another,’ that man goes from death to death” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4:4:19). That is, for such a one each “life” is really a death. Then we begin to compound the evil by adding various definitions such as “I am a human being,” “I am wise,” “I am a sinner,” and so forth. The ultimate madness manifests when we come to say: “I am God.”

So the sense of separation from God, which results in the formation of the “I” concept, is the source of evil. Therefore, even if the “I” is killed or dissolved, if a consciousness or a conviction of separation persists, the “I” will grow back, just like a malignant tumor. Although all evil must be removed from us, it will be done in vain if the source of evil is not also gotten rid of.

There is also another secret of spiritual life here: if we go after the source right away, the process of eliminating evil will be relatively easy and painless, as well as quick. (I say relatively, please note.) However large the tree, if we go to the root we can kill it straightaway. Likewise, if we do not right away strike effectively at the root, the source, of evil, we shall be like someone trying to destroy a giant redwood tree by whittling away on it with a pocket knife. After years we might succeed—but how much better to cut off the root and accomplish the task much easier and faster. By striking at the source of evil we also avoid the danger of falling back into darkness and away from the spiritual path.

Another ploy of false religion is to convince us that we get rid of negativity by affirming or cultivating “opposite qualities.” But this is just shallow behavior modification and mind gaming. We must fill our consciousness with the Divine Presence through meditation. We need not fight with evil impulses or thoughts, but instead ignore them and center our attention in the spirit-Self. Knowing all these things to be true, we must get busy and go deep within ourselves, to our very heart, our “core” or center. “Seek in the heart the source of evil and expunge it.” You do not really kill it, because it does not even have a true existence of its own. But you simply end its darkness by invoking the Light.

### **A fearful truth**

Now we are going to face a fearful truth: *It lives fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple as well as in the heart of the man of desire.* This is not a happy thought, but its truth is evident to anyone who observes both himself and others.

“It lives fruitfully”—it extends itself, increases itself, and makes variations of its own theme. It is creative—projecting many manifestations of itself, including many “faces”



that exclude the vision of God from our heart. “That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23). To eliminate these evils we must go into the heart and destroy the source rather than run around outside pursuing the symptoms. In this case, the mind and intellect are definitely “outside” elements, as well, and no amount of intellectual conditioning will have any real effect.

“It lives fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple as well as in the heart of the man of desire.” This is extremely important, because we prefer to lie to ourselves and create a fine self-image for ourselves and others to believe in. Under that delusion we congratulate ourselves on not being like “others” when we are no better at all—usually we are worse because of our pride.

One of the most damaging effects of false religion is its suppression—rather than elimination—of inner negativity. This is accomplished through the suppression of our perceptions or recognitions of our inner negativity. Many people live absolutely vile lives and have no idea that it is so—just the opposite. False religion blinds its adherents to their true status.

I well remember the time when in my spiritual search I considered joining the Roman Catholic Church (this was in pre-Vatican II days). For some reason Protestants are traumatized by the idea of confession, and I was no exception. So I began to think: If I went to confession today, what would I confess? And going back over the day I found a tremendous amount of sins to confess! This chagrined and frightened me, for I had not noticed any problems at all that day! I had been literally blinded to them. The next evening I did the same examination and found once again that my life was absolutely in tatters, spiritually speaking, when all the time I had been thinking that I was doing quite well. Day after day when I examined my thoughts and deeds I found that I was profoundly spiritually sick—even to some degree spiritually dead. Although I had shed the ignorant theology of Protestantism, the evil mindset was still present and thriving.

### **Out but still in**

This is very much the situation with many people who believe they have extricated themselves from a false spiritual system. They have indeed eliminated the superficial elements such as intellectual doctrines, but the spiritual distortion produced by the time spent in that system remains intact and continues to distort and often ruin their present endeavors. Highly dangerous are the instant conversions in the sense of drastic and instant behavior change, for such changes are usually pathological—or non-existent. Testimonies of instant “deliverance” from long-standing problems sound good, for they appeal to our innate spiritual laziness. But the truth is we ourselves must undo what we have done. We must dig ourselves out of the mire we have plunged into. We must take down stone by stone the structure of ignorance and evil which we have built through the aeons. What we have done we must undo. And it takes will power and effort. Otherwise it is all untrue.

Instant drastic change only means that we are in real trouble, that the moles have only burrowed deep underground to hide, waiting to come out in an unguarded moment and destroy us. We must remember that Macbeth was destroyed because of his intense—and equally false—positive self-image. His arrogance, like that of the “saved” or the “positive thinkers,” led him into certain death while he affirmed his invincibility and immortality. By overconfidence we become more susceptible to evil

than by any other means. Usually the more “positive” we are in our thinking, the easier we are swept right into the garbage can along with all the rest. For this reason there is great truth in the adage: “Positive thinkers are positive stinkers.” Of course, the positive thinking we are speaking of is self-delusion—not real positivity. The only way to think positive is to think of God—the Only Positive.

“It lives fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple as well as in the heart of the man of desire.” A bad, lax, or false disciple will never even come to discover this deadly Inner Dweller. Therefore the aphorism speaks of “the devoted disciple” since he alone can gain enough self-awareness to perceive his inner state and face up to it. As “seekers” we must realize that we are suffering from the same disease as everybody else. On a certain level there is no difference between us and the people we usually consider to be less than ourselves in evolution or spiritual aspiration and understanding, for the Master says that this source of evil is as fruitfully dwelling in our hearts as it is in theirs. This is extremely important, because few things are worse than this “pure” attitude that people can get just because they are working at spiritual development.

For us to look down on those who are not “spiritual” or “religious” is like people in a hospital priding themselves on the delusion that they are the well ones while everybody outside is sick. But they would not be in the hospital if they were not sick, would they? Simply registering in is a declaration of illness or defect. This is also why it is silly to blame religion when we see the faults of its adherents, for if they were not sick they would not need the therapy! The purpose of religion is healing, plain and simple. The sicker we are, the more medicine we take. In the same way, the more religious we are—in the true sense—the sicker we are acknowledging ourselves to be. So our religiosity is not a statement of health but of infirmity. By saying we are “on the path,” we are admitting that we have not reached the Goal any more than those in the world around us.

### **How is this?**

We should not forget the Cheshire cat’s words to Alice: If we were not mad we would not be here. The earth plane is the lowest and grossest level of existence that there is—even the astral hells are superior. So those who find themselves on the first rung of the ladder, and admit that they have been perched on it life after life, have no cause for boasting or looking askance at others.

Why does the source of evil live “fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple, as well as in the heart of the man of desire”? Because the sense of separate—even independent—existence was planted in us the moment we began to manifest as atoms of hydrogen. As we passed through gaseous, mineral, plant, animal, and human evolution, that terrible thing was living and growing inside us, fed and increased by the world around us as we took it in and believed in it implicitly. As we evolve, so does the ego. (Here we mean evolution in the sense of the development of increased complexity and therefore capacity—not in the sense of growing closer to divinity.) Its manifestations become increasingly clever—and we become increasingly blinded. Evil, too, evolves so that we will not perceive its real nature. Indeed, we often admire evil for its ingenuity and power without realizing what it really is. However clever our intellect is—more so is our ego. However refined our state of consciousness may be—just so refined is our ignorance.

Material evil manifests as evil deeds. Mental evil manifests as evil thoughts. Spiritual evil manifests as evil religion. Such religion is the prevailing form of Satanism, beside which the antics of the minority that call themselves Satanists are quite

insignificant. All the “black magicians” of the world have never equaled the evil and destruction perpetrated by the false “righteous” of all ages. The evolved person can become far more evil than the unevolved person—of this we must be aware, for it applies to us. We who are more evolved than others are also (at least potentially) more spiritually sick than they are. So of what can we boast? We have no reason to feel ourselves superior to others just because our evil is more subtle and therefore less obvious. We have become genteel sinners, cultured demons.

The “man of desire” is one who is living solely for the fulfillment of his egoic desires and habits.

### **The strong**

*Only the strong can kill it out. The weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death. And it is a plant that lives and increases throughout the ages. It flowers when the man has accumulated unto himself innumerable existences. He who will enter upon the path of power must tear this thing out of his heart. And then the heart will bleed, and the whole life of the man seem to be utterly dissolved.*

Is the refusal to do battle really the easy way out? Not at all. The next words are: “The weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death.” In other words, the weak will have to wait until the inner evil becomes so powerful and dominant that it disintegrates itself by its very nature. However, at the same time it will annihilate all the bodies, gross and subtle, along with it. This does happen. Evil and darkness can become so strong that all the vehicles of the manifesting spirit are destroyed. Thus the spirit will find itself right back where it started—at the very beginning of evolution. The spirit will then have to go forth in evolution all over again. The entire journey must be travelled again, and always with the risk that the same folly will be repeated in the taking of the left-hand path.

So this is what will happen to the weak who will not engage in the struggle of the spirit. The evil will grow so much that it will ultimately destroy itself. But it will destroy them along with it. One of the most prevalent delusions of the “weak” is that they are not yet “ready” for conscious evolution, not quite “able” to commit themselves to the battle, but that if they wait a while things will get better—and consequently easier. But they will not. Instead, evil will flourish and increasingly absorb the powers of the various bodies like a horrible parasite, eventually assimilating them totally unto itself. And they will indeed be incapable of spiritual life, but by then they will no longer even think about the subject.

I once met a frail woman who had an immense tumor attached to one side of her face. The tumor was larger than her head. As the tumor increased in size her body wasted away, until finally the body and the tumor both died. So it is with those who follow the left-hand path to its very end.

### **Frantic folly**

One of the worst—and most beloved—follies we can fall into is the idea that if we keep on feeding and fulfilling our desires they will in time fade away and we will be free. Just plain good sense should tell us that whatever is fed will grow and become even bigger and stronger. There are people who have so fed their lusts, giving up their vital life energies to satisfy the insatiable beasts, that they have correspondingly begun to fade away as the lusts became greater and more powerful. In time it is as though there is no real person left anymore—just a raging menagerie of material desires. This is true of any material drive that is given into. In time the tiger we are riding will devour us. Of course such deluded people do not realize they are slaves, but think they

are masters of their ravenous pets. But their fate will be that of the woman in a silly little ditty I learned as a child at camp:

O she sailed away on a lovely summer's day  
On the back of a crocodile.  
"You see," said she, "he's as tame as he can be,  
"And I'll ride him down the Nile."

So she waved her friends goodbye (as the crock winked his eye),  
Wearing a great big smile.  
At the end of the ride, the lady was inside,  
And the smile on the crocodile!

How many unpeople there are running frantically around seemingly fulfilling themselves, when in reality they are steadily melting away, consumed by the fires of their own desires. And the smile is on the face of the crocodile, for the Master does not say: "In time the weak will grow beyond evil and ignorance," but "the weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death." How long and how terrifying the prospect! For he continues: "And it is a plant that lives and increases throughout the ages." "It flowers when the man has accumulated unto himself innumerable existences." It is very flattering for someone to say to us: "You are an 'old soul," but the truth is, it is particularly in the "old soul" that this deadly thing is flowering. Once someone said to a man I knew: "You are a very old soul." To that he answered: "Then I must be a very dumb old soul if after so long I am still in this earth-plane kindergarten!"

### **Entrenched**

"It flowers when the man has accumulated unto himself innumerable existences." In other words, when you and I have become aged, seasoned, and ripened, it is the strongest in us. The more evolved or developed we are, the more developed has it become simultaneously. I once heard a British psychiatrist telling how amazed he was in observing psychiatric work among "primitive" people. Instead of requiring years, even decades of psychoanalysis, these people were often cured after a twenty minute session. The "difficult" ones required two or three sessions—no more. This was because their egos were very simple. But those who have evolved to the point where conscious self-evolution is possible have greatly-developed egos with many convolutions and complexities. Sorry, but it happens to be one of the rules of the game. This is why we must truly become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-3).

"He who will enter upon the path of power must tear this thing out of his heart." The expression "path of power" is used because the thing that destroys us is the idea: "I do this," "I do not do that," the root of which is "I do." Because we are identifying with the ego and the energy complex it draws around itself, the only power we can wield is that power. The path of power is also spoken of because the path to the Real is the path of mastery, the path of control of the self (not of others). Since our aspiration is for infinity, our goal is to wield the infinite power of God. But we have to choose: our life or God's life. If we stay centered in the ego, we will have nothing but its limited power. When we take the power of the ego and begin to exert it—supposedly for the purpose of evolution—only three things can result:

One: we can fail and realize that we have failed. If this happens we are truly among the lucky ones.

Two: the mind under the command of the ego creates delusions of success. Hallucinations may even be created by the mind to lead us astray. “The Master X spoke to me last night and told me that I am to help in bringing in the New Age.” Or, “The Space Brothers contacted me and said that when the mother ship comes I will be one of those beamed up and saved.” These are just two examples, but whatever form the delusions take they usually have one thing in common: they present a hope of a future status, thereby keeping those who accept them contented with being nothing at all for the present. No matter how stagnated or even degenerated their lives may be, they keep telling themselves that “when the time comes” everything will change and they will be changed, too. Without effort, of course. When people are not too evolved and are small-minded, the ego deludes them in correspondingly simple and small ways. As has been said, as the individual passes up the evolutionary scale, so also does the ego which provides suitable distractions according to their development.

Three: the most unfortunate is the minority that travel that path of power but, finding that their power is limited, realize they need another power beyond themselves and begin to draw off the power of other beings. This is done either through taking the power of other people—a form of occult vampirism—or, what is more usual, by “trafficking” with various disembodied beings (“spirits”). The spirits with which they commune “do things” for them. As a result they become anything from mediums to ceremonial magicians evoking spirits, and so on. But whatever the form, the process is the same: they use the power of other beings.

### **Trapped by spirits**

Here is how it usually comes about. The person reads a book about “folk” magic under some name such as “Wicca,” in which a simple ritual action is prescribed—often along with the recitation of some little “magical” jingle. He does it, and it works. This impresses him very much since he is used to a “Churchianity” that produces no perceptible results. So he tries some more of the same, and that works, too. Wonderful! And he gets more involved in learning and practicing such things. But after a while this simple stuff no longer works like it did—sometimes it fails to work at all. The person then delves into stronger, more classical magical methods. Those, too, work for a while, and then they begin to fade out on the practitioner as did the simpler methods. Because of this he begins to practice more formal ceremonial magic. Somewhere along the line he comes to practices which involve the invocation of some types of spirits and begins linking his life forces with those entities. In time he may come to be totally under the power of these “helpers,” and the supposed servants turn out to be masters and the former master becomes the servant. This is never pleasant. But it is inevitable, since everything incurs a karmic debt.

Cases have been recorded through the centuries of “magicians” who commanded the spirits for many years, and the spirits obeyed their every directive. And then the day of reckoning arrived when the karma came around full circle and the debt had to be paid in like coin—the coin of total servitude. If this does not happen during life, it will take place after death on the astral plane. The accounts of people dying with the declaration on their lips that demons are carrying them away are not false. They are gruesomely true.

There are spirits called “soul eaters” that engage in the ultimate vampirism. They actually “swallow” or encompass the person and assimilate the energies of his subtle bodies. When all the energies are absorbed by them, and only a shell like a dry leaf or a piece of ash (one occultist I know refers to them as being like the discarded shell of a locust) remains, they release the person, who then is literally blown about aimlessly by

the energy tides of the subtle cosmos. They cannot take rebirth and they cannot function in any way anywhere. They no longer possess the inner bodies that are needed to act as a matrix around which the normal human form can be built. They are the broken pots referred to in the Old Testament. Incapable of being reformed and reworked, they remain locked in their state of desolation—usually for an entire cycle of creation until in the universal dissolution they are “melted down” and thus able to begin all over again in the next manifestation of creation, starting over at the very bottom. It is not a pleasant ending to what began as a confident treading of the path of power and the command of others rather than the mastery of one’s own self (which alone is the true righthand path).

So there are these three possibilities for the person who treads the path of power. The first one is not so bad, because the person fails and therefore has not the ability to mess himself up. As a rule he then decides that the goal is either unattainable for him or simply does not exist for anyone—that spiritual life is indeed only fantasy. Consequently he embraces an utterly material mode of life and dismisses all other possibilities. It is these flash-in-the-pan people who momentarily support the latest fads in “spiritual movements” until becoming disillusioned and utterly disinterested in any kind of higher life.

### **Seeking freedom**

Wise are those who through their failure realize that they need something more than their own power to succeed, and instead of turning to astral wanderers turn to God. If they can avoid—or at least survive—the false spiritual systems that abound, they have a good chance at succeeding in their quest. And the cornerstone of their success will be the realization that for their spirit to live their ego must die along with its illusion of separation from God. This is why the seraphim and cherubim are said to cover their feet with their wings (Isaiah 6:2). They are cutting off or inhibiting the mistaken idea of “I do” in the sense of action independent of the Divine power and will. They also cover their faces as a sign of negating the sense of an “I” separate from God. In this way they rise before the “face” of God and enter into perfect consciousness.

What we must do is lay hold of God’s power, to ascend with God’s “wings.” This is known as “laying hold on the kingdom of God” in New Testament parlance. But we can only lay hold of the Kingdom of God with God’s hands. The false “I,” the false self, must die so the true Self, the spirit, can come to life in us. We cannot have both. Either our false “I” must die so God the Truth can live in and through us, or the God within us must die so the false “I” can live its life that is a lie. Therefore it is said that “He who will enter upon the path of power must tear this thing out of his heart.”

These simple words show us some very definite things. The first is that it is not going to be easy, for it is “rooted” in us. The second is that it will have to be forcefully, even violently, ripped out without hesitation. There really is no other way. It will not automatically drop away or relinquish its power over us. The ego never dies a natural death or of old age—it must be slain. It is a demon that must be exorcised—a term that literally means “cut out.” Like a bad tooth it will have roots, and its extraction will hurt. But in this way alone will we gain the divine power by which we can conquer. For it is not our own power that we use to accomplish the task, but the Divine Power in which we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). There must be the realistic acknowledgment of our own incapacity. The true path, the egoless path of power, is quite different from the false egoic path of power.

### **In the “end” is the beginning**

“And then the heart will bleed, and the whole life of the man seem to be utterly dissolved.” When this evil, death-bearing thing is torn out of the heart it will bleed. Vain is the question: “When is it going to get easier?” The heart will bleed and the whole life seem to be utterly dissolving. Of course the opposite will be true. For the first time we will be coming to life.

We can hold on to nothing. Before we can be filled with the infinite we must become thoroughly empty. We must become perfect in letting go. Those who set a price on spiritual life, saying: “This much and no more will I ‘give up,’” are thereby destined to failure. For the cost is ALL we have. This is only reasonable, since what we think we have is not really ours at all. Therefore to really come to possess the kingdom we must first rid ourself of the false conviction that anything is ours at the present moment. We are not really giving up anything since we do not really have anything—we only think we do. We are only trading an illusion for a glorious reality. But those who cling to illusion cannot come to possess the Real.

To succeed in spiritual life we must at the beginning say: “There is nothing I will not do and no sacrifice I will not make.” And mean it. For as Jesus said (Matthew 10:39), only those who are willing to “lose” their life will come to find it, whereas those who try to hold on to or “save” their life will lose it, having never possessed it at any time.

We must break out of the mirror of illusion that shows us only what is not. We must cast aside anything which produces, increases, or affirms our false identity. Otherwise we are either going to fail or incur terrible pain as we are pulled in both directions, for the Master continues: “the whole life of the man will seem to be utterly dissolved.” Absolutely the false life, the unlife of the ego, will be utterly dissolved, will melt away. And when that time comes the person will feel he is going into annihilation. This is understandable since everything he has ever identified with as “me” and “mine” is falling away. The fact that his identity was mistaken makes it in no way easier. We are all on the lefthand path, thinking that death is life and that life is death. But we must awaken from the dream and see death for what it is and life for what it is—and know which is which. Otherwise when we come to that moment of seeming annihilation we may draw back and stop the process and continue on in ignorance. For of this we can be assured: the process is never easy, nor is it ever without our free consent.

We practice meditation to enable us to pass these various tests, both inward and external. What is essential is to be centered in our spirits—our consciousness—and detachedly observant of all that is external to us, including the levels of our being that we are used to thinking of as “inside” us although they are as external to us as is the physical body. However, we cannot have that perspective until we have learned to transfer our awareness away from our wrappings and into our true nature as spirit. Which is why we meditate.

### **Seeing true**

Having truly come to life inwardly, we are able to realize that what we formerly identified as real and as “us” is only the cosmic play of light and shadow, a dream that upon awakening will be no more. Thus we can say with full comprehension the words of the hymn: “Change and decay all around I see. O Thou Who changest not, abide with me!” As a result we will not draw back in the times of dissolution and trial, but will steadily move onward, beyond the illusions that have so (literally) captivated us from life to life.

When we are practiced in ignoring all the noise and keeping intent on the Silence which is God, then when these things begin to melt away we will not mind. Through

meditation we repolarize our life energies and our attention away from the dreams and press on toward our awakening. We unlearn falsehood and come to know the Real.

The Master says that the whole life will seem to be utterly dissolved, but the man of wisdom, the man of meditation, will know that in actuality it is death that is being dissolved to make way for the advent of true life.

Let us look at those words again: “The whole heart will bleed and the whole life of the man seem to be utterly dissolved.” Can we come in time to actively desire this, although others are pulling back in terror from the prospect? Of spiritual life it can be said just as it was about the Westward Movement in the last century: “The cowards never started and the weak died along the way.”

Sometimes people say: “This is just what I have been looking for.” And sometimes it is true, but although they have been seeking the gate it does not mean that they are prepared for what lies beyond it, or even for the effort that is required to open the gate and pass through. None of us has been looking for that, but it must be faced if we would succeed. Just as the heart of man has not aspired to the things God has prepared for him (I Corinthians 2:9), so the heart of man has not realized what is required for him to receive that “free gift” (Ephesians 2:8) from the hand of God. Many love to seek but few can endure the finding—it is too real and demands too much change.

So we just love the anticipation and speculation as to what it might be like. But we do not expect God to play such a trick on us as to actually throw open the door, pull us through, shove us onto the path, and shout: “Run!” That we are not really expecting. Of course it is good that we do not know what is coming, for we might not have sought for it!

### **Grim realities**

*This ordeal must be endured: it may come at the first step of the perilous ladder which leads to the path of life: it may not come until the last. But, O disciple, remember that it has to be endured, and fasten the energies of your soul upon the task. Live neither in the present nor the future, but in the eternal. This giant weed cannot flower there: this blot upon existence is wiped out by the very atmosphere of eternal thought.*

Following the Path of Discipleship is like riding a tiger—if we get off we will be eaten up. With this in mind the Master continues: “This ordeal must be endured.” Note the verb endure, for “he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22). That word “endure” is not a very cheerful one, but it conveys the right idea: there is no escaping or mitigating the process. Just think of what gold goes through to be refined, or how much pressure and heat is exerted on a piece of coal for thousands of years before its blackness and opaqueness is changed into the clarity of diamond. That is why we say: “A diamond is a piece of coal that never gave up, and a saint is a sinner that never gave up.”

There is no avoidance of the fires of the spiritual alchemy that turn us “from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to the Light, from death to Immortality.” This is why Jesus would not take the drugged wine offered Him before and during the crucifixion (Matthew 27:34). It was called “the wine of mercy,” but He well knew that it was not merciful but deadening. But remember: His eyes were not fixed upon the momentary sufferings of the cross but upon the resurrection and the infinite life that lay beyond it (Hebrews 12:2). We must have the same perspective.

Once we have started on the path there can be none of this frequently heard nonsense: “I am going to have to stop for a while and think it over. I have to take ‘time out’ for a while and try to assimilate all that I’ve heard and learned.” This is the line



given by those who NEVER take up spiritual life. Such avoidance tactics are deadly for the aspiring disciple, who must be ever pressing forward and persevere—another word for endure.

This next statement is most important. “It may come at the first step of the perilous ladder which leads to the path of life: it may not come until the last.” Some people go through the requisite ordeal at the very beginning. The higher Self of others knows they are weak, so it does not happen until they have progressed somewhat and become stronger and wiser.

Since we love comfort and ease we look upon the cataclysmic process as “bad” and ask: “Why do bad things happen to good people?” “Why do the good suffer so?” not realizing that this is an essential process that is really merciful, for it frees them and readies them for higher consciousness. But this is why some people go along for a while and then become toppled by the advent of this ordeal. This may sound quite discouraging and not something to look forward to, but since the “ordeal” only takes place in relation to the unreal part of us, if our awareness is centered in our spirit we will not really find it so bad.

### **The ladder**

Let us back up for a consideration of the expression: “The perilous ladder which leads to the path of life.” There are depictions in the Eastern Orthodox Church of the “Divine Ladder” which show people climbing up a ladder, at the top of which Jesus is waiting to receive them. In other words, when the top of the ladder is reached the work is done. But here the Master tells us that the ladder which we climb so laboriously is not itself the path to life, but what leads to the path of life. In other words, when we would like to think we are nearing the end we are really only nearing the beginning. Our struggle up the ladder is just the attempt to start.

And the ladder is perilous. The depictions of the Divine Ladder show people falling from the ladder—even being pulled from it by demons—and plunging downward into the mouth of “the dragon.” By this we see that the ladder is not just difficult and demanding, it is dangerous—perilous. It is dangerous because all the powers of evil inside and outside of us will do their utmost to stop us from getting up onto the path. This was the experience of Buddha long before us. There is a nineteenth century Protestant song that says: “Heaven wills to thee a crown. Hell is moved to cast thee down.” But if we have shifted our consciousness into our higher selves, into “heaven,” then all the antics and tactics of “hell” will be laughably ineffectual. The danger exists only insofar as we are caught in lower consciousness.

It is like a storm. If you are out in it, you will get wet and blown about, but if you are in a shelter, you will stay dry and calm. Therefore we hear much about “taking refuge” in God. So it is all a matter of where we are “living.” If we insist on being of the earth, earthly, we shall then be blown about by every wind. If, on the other hand, we “walk in the spirit,” we shall have peace. The danger—and the pain—is to the ego, never to the spirit. But if we identify with the ego it will drag us down into chaos along with it. If, however, we identify with the spirit we shall rise above all the storms.

The ladder is also perilous because failure may result in our having to wait for a long time before we can try the ascent again.

Of course all the perils come from inside us, which makes them all the more perilous since they are harder to cope with than outside influences. Since we usually identify with and foster them ignorantly, we often have to say: “We have met the enemy and they are us!”

## **Going forward**

“But, O disciple, remember that it has to be endured, and fasten the energies of your soul upon the task.” Saint John Vianney said: “Go straight to God like a shot out of a cannon.” The Upanishads say that the mind is like an arrow—aim it at the Goal and fly to God like an arrow.

“Therefore fasten the energies of your soul upon the task.” This is why we have to follow the path of power. We must control all our powers (energies) and focus them upon our spiritual work, which is the ending of the (seeming) separation between us and God.

To do this we must “Live neither in the present nor the future, but in the eternal.” That is, we must let nothing in the present or future influence us, but look at things with the eyes of eternity, with the eyes of spirit. We dare not say: “Today I cannot take up a dedicated spiritual life, but in the future I will.” Rather, we must realize that it is the spirit alone that now is and shall be, and lay hold on the realms of the spirit NOW.

Notice that we are not told to live in eternity but in the Eternal—that is, we are to live in God. For in God alone is freedom. Remember the “Devil” card of the Tarot. The two people have chains around their necks and think they are enslaved to the Devil. But it is easy to see that they can slip off the chains without effort if they will just realize it. If we live in the present or future we will experience this false bondage, but if we slip the bonds and move our consciousness into the Eternal we shall know no bondage in any form.

Through false identities, through false bondage to “commitments,” “relationships,” and “obligations” we try to excuse ourselves from spiritual pursuit. Jesus spoke of this in his parable (Luke 14:16-24) in which the man invites his friends to a feast but they all make excuses not to come. One wants to try out plowing with his new oxen, another wants to go look at some property he has just bought, and another excuses himself because he has just gotten married. All of them, declares Jesus, are unworthy of the feast, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

We have but one true commitment, one true relationship, and but one true obligation: to God. All else is the illusory bondage shown by the Devil card. That which obstructs spiritual life should not even exist for us on a practical level. In God, even karma does not exist.

## **Giant weeds**

“This giant weed cannot flower there.” The sense of separation from God flourishes in time and space, in a consciousness “outside” of God. And what do weed flowers do? They make more seeds which become more weeds. In other words, the delusion of the separate, independent ego flowers and produces the seeds that will result in more delusions, more lifetimes. But in the Eternal that is not possible, for there all delusions and their seeds are roasted in the consuming fire that is God. So the process is simple: Join yourself unto God in a perfect union and your karmas are dispelled like the morning mist. And that union is accomplished by meditation through which we cultivate the consciousness of God in which delusions cannot come to flower or seed.

In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna says that there are two paths: the path of the moon and the path of the sun. The path of the moon leads to rebirth and the path of the sun leads to superhuman evolution. But the wise, He says, treads neither path but enters directly into the Being of God. “Burnt clean in the blaze of My Being, in Me many find home” (Bhagavad Gita 4:10). As in the child’s game of “tag,” once we are “home” we are out of the game and free.

“This giant weed cannot flower there: this blot upon existence is wiped out by the

very atmosphere of eternal thought.” What is “eternal thought”? It is that thought which is the Eternal Itself, which is God. This is discovered only in the silence of meditation, and by its means the “giant weed” cannot grow, but in time is totally wiped out. In one sense we are transmuting ourselves into that “eternal thought.” Just the atmosphere, just the radiation—that Light which blazes forth—dispels all ignorance. No evil, either inner or outer, can come near those who live in the Eternal Thought.

### **5. Kill out all sense of separateness.**

In case we might have missed the whole point, we come to Aphorism Five which is separated from Aphorism Four by all the material we have just considered. As has been said more than once, the sense of separateness is the primal evil, the root of all other evils, that nests in the very core of our being. It is the delusion that we are one thing and that God is another, that somehow we exist independently of God, different and separate, when all the time we are perfectly and irrevocably united to God so that we can legitimately be said to be gods within God. Reclaiming the awareness of that unity is the only true religion. Since he lived in that state consciously, Jesus said: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30), and “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). And we shall one day be able to say the same things. That is our true destiny—to say as did Jesus: “the Father is in me, and I in him” (John 10:38). The mind cannot encompass it beforehand, but we shall attain it inevitably. So it is important that we understand the nature of Krishna, Buddha, and Jesus, because if we do not understand their nature, their manifestation, and their state of being, we cannot possibly comprehend our own destiny. Of course, until we attain that status we shall not fully comprehend it, but even now there must be some conception, otherwise we shall not intelligently aspire to it. And without aspiration there is no attainment.

We have to consciously prepare ourselves to attain these higher states. If we deny these higher states, or do not even know they exist, they shall indeed not exist for us. One Master often said: “If you do not believe, you will not see; and if you do not see, you will not believe.” Even though we do not fully understand, if we will at least give room in our minds to the possibility of these higher levels of consciousness we can begin to prepare for them. Of course the bedrock foundation of this believing and attaining is meditation.

One of the saddest truths is that most people’s worship of God actually separates them from God, whereas it should link them with God. But when the concept—and consequently the approach—is wrong, then our attempts literally backfire on us, sending us in the opposite direction. The worship of God must be esoteric in nature, based on esoteric insight, and performed by those who have both esoteric knowledge and perception. Otherwise it is no worship at all, but a mockery—both of us and of God. And the ultimate worship is meditation.

How shall we kill out all sense of separateness? By entering into our very depths and removing that primal illusion, the true “original sin” (keeping in mind that “sin” means to fall short of perception and apprehension). Perhaps, the primal (first) illusion is that of simply looking outward instead of inward, for if we look inward we will behold God. The moment that we turn from within and look outward, thinking to see something outside of God, which is of course a delusion, we begin to see falsely.

### **The primal evil**

Although it is the sense of separateness that the Master is speaking of in *Light On The Path*, it would not be amiss to say that externalized or outward-moving consciousness is really the primal evil. For through it we lose sight of God—and

therefore of our true selves—and begin calling the separate illusion “my self.”

So this whole sense of separateness has to be killed out thoroughly without reservation. And not through mere intellection or verbal philosophizing. The only way it can be done is by reestablishing within us the sense of identity with God. When we look at “ourselves,” we see ourselves as utterly isolated and constantly changing entities. In other words, we can only see the falseness of ourselves, whereas God is the truth of ourselves. Therefore we must substitute the consciousness of God for the sense of separation. This is why we meditate, which keeps our eyes on God, which fills us with Divine consciousness. In God we will truly see ourselves. In “us” there is duality, in God there is non-duality.

Sitting around saying: “I am He,” “I am That,” “I am Immortal,” will do nothing except delude us since we do not know the real Self, the real “I.” The thing we call “I” and “me” is the ego—an impostor, a cuckoo’s egg that will destroy the consciousness of our true nature. Since we do not know who “we” really are, instead of trying to meditate on ourselves we put our minds on God, the Self of our Self. And we do that directly—not by philosophizing or conceptualizing, or even discursive praying, but by meditation. In time the Divine Consciousness will manifest within our own consciousness, restoring it to its original, divine state. Meditation becomes a mirror in which we see our face and the face of God, and come to know them as ONE. To intrude any thought or concept there is to set up an idol and worship a “god” that is not God. In meditation we should be thinking of nothing, because God is in truth the No Thing. If in meditation we hold a concept of God we are making God an object, whereas God is the eternal Subject.

## **6. Kill out desire for sensation.**

When people spend much time in sense deprivation tanks they may experience great mental stress because they cannot stand just being aware of awareness. This is because they have been veiling their awareness for so many lifetimes by sensory stimuli that they are addicted to externalized consciousness.

“Kill out desire for sensation” means that we are to have no attraction for anything external. And we must remember that many things which we consider to be internal, such as emotions and intellect, are actually external to our consciousness even if they do seem to be within our bodies. Further, we must cut off desire for all subtle sensations—those that lie in the astral and causal realms as well as the obvious material-physical sensations.

Notice that the Master does not say to cut off sensation, but to cut off desire or affinity for sensation. That is, we need to learn to move among sensation without being affected or anyway conditioned by it. The wise have said that our external experiences must be to us like writing on water—without any internal effect or control.

Since they are external to us, even seemingly positive feelings, desires, or emotions such as peace, happiness, contentment, love, compassion—yes, even the desire or urge for spiritual life or “truth”—must have no influence or effect on us. Why? Because they are just feelings—they are not the real thing. Real peace, happiness, contentment, love, compassion, and aspiration for spiritual life are indeed to be sought—but they are realities far beyond mere sensations. Most of them lie in the intelligence and will. Just as the ego is the false self, so the emotions and partially physical sensations that masquerade as these states are equally delusive and ultimately dissolve, leaving us desolate. This is a very difficult lesson for most of us to learn. But it must be learned if the real things are ever to be found by us.

## **“Spiritual” sensuality**

We must especially avoid this kind of sensuality in spiritual life and not be drawn into desire for “holy” or exalted feelings when engaging in religious practices. And most especially we must cut off these things within meditation. To savor the sensations of ease, etc., that can arise in meditation—not to mention the astral lights and sensations of floating, expanding, etc., that inevitably arise—is to turn from God back into our false self. Visions and “spiritual experiences” are also to be eschewed—especially when they take the form of “astral travel.” This is the meaning of the Zen statement: “If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him.” That is, if in meditation you “meet the Buddha” in the form of either exalted intellectual insights, visions, or other seemingly sacred phenomena, kill it out ruthlessly—just as the Master is advising us in these aphorisms.

The idea is to become utterly detached, indifferent, to all sensations—that is, to all that is outside of us. Or more exactly, to those experiences that will make us come to believe in the reality of externalities and will in time create in us the desire for such illusions, thus causing us to lose what is real—and within.

We must continue to live, to reap our karmas, to fulfill our destinies, and it may require great effort to do so. But we must at the same time be easefully detached, viewing all that goes on as a great unfolding drama. There is nothing wrong in enjoying it, just as long as we do not get drawn into it and drown our self-awareness within it through self-forgetfulness. Only the enlightened truly enjoy life. The rest are tossed about by alternating pleasures and pains, mistaking appearance for reality.

Like the dove of Noah we must not come to rest anywhere upon “earth,” but fly back to the Ark of divine being (Genesis 8:8, 9). This is the higher meaning of Jesus’ saying that He had nowhere to “lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). He could no longer center or confine his consciousness within anything in all the worlds, gross or subtle. There was nothing in which he could (or would) ground himself and with which he would establish an identity. “Our hearts are ever restless till they come to rest in Thee,” wrote Saint Augustine, affirming that what is true of Christ is true also of us.

There are fish in the sea that must keep moving or they will suffocate. We are such “fish” in the sea of evolving cosmic life. We must keep moving or we shall “die” to true consciousness and fall into the realm of “death”—of delusive consciousness that is no consciousness at all, practically speaking. “Does the road wind uphill all the way?” “Yes, to the very end.” In many old stories there is great wisdom. For example, Red Riding Hood dawdled along the way picking flowers instead of getting on to her destination. So she entered into conversation with the wolf and ended up entering into his stomach, as well. This is also true of the spiritual seeker. In the story of the tortoise and the hare we see that the hare lost because he kept stopping here and there while the turtle kept on moving steadily.

What we must destroy is the affinity for any relative state of consciousness or relative state of existence. And, again, the only way to do that is to keep pushing ourselves toward the Absolute.

The next rule is truly amazing, considering how we are constantly speaking of evolution.

## **7. Kill out the hunger for growth.**

Again, we are not told to kill out growth—we came into this relative existence for that very purpose—but to kill out the hunger, the egoic impulse for the growth that is no true growth, the progress that is only the progress of the ego and not of the spirit-Self.

First we must come to the realization that we cannot become more than what we

are. Therefore we must know our true nature. In a sense we do not need to grow, we need to manifest. There is a great difference between the two verbs. Secondly, growth is an external experience and therefore an appearance only, not a reality. We cannot be anything but what we have always been. We can dig up an apple tree, take it around the world, fly it to many planets, and bring it back, and it will still be an apple tree, for that whole process was external to it.

There is story in South India about a bitter gourd who went to the holy city of Varanasi (or Kashi), where every Hindu hopes to go at least once in his life. When Bitter Gourd came back, the animals and plants gathered around in admiration. "O Bitter Gourd!" they exclaimed, "just think, you have been to Kashi." "Yes," agreed the bitter gourd, "I have been to Kashi." "O Bitter Gourd," they asked, "did you worship Lord Vishwanath [Shiva] there in Kashi?" "Indeed," answered Bitter Gourd, "I worshipped Lord Vishwanath there." "Did you take your bath in the sacred Ganges?" "I certainly did take a bath in the Ganges." "Did you also worship Goddess Annapurna [the consort of Shiva] there?" "Yes, of course I did." "Then you came home." "Yes, I came home." "Bitter Gourd," they all said, "you must be a transformed person." "Yes, indeed, I can never be as I was," he declared. But then somebody thought to taste him, and found he was still bitter. You get the idea. Nothing external can create an internal change, although externals can—and must—facilitate the development of our internal awareness and evolution.

We are indeed to develop the ability to share in the infinity of God. But we will not grow into or become God. We will experience the being of God while remaining what we have always been. There will have been no essential change of being, but a total change of consciousness. This is so far beyond our present state that we simply cannot comprehend or conceive of it except to a minimal degree. But we can "lay hold" on it, for that and that alone is the true entering into the kingdom of God. The kingdom will always be God's, not ours, but by His loving will we can come to "possess" it in the sense of participating in it. For the kingdom of God *is* God.

But the ego wants to extend itself, to develop abilities that it can claim as its own, that will be under its own control. Such are the psychic and creative powers which can become playgrounds for the ego and which the wise warn us to avoid assiduously—or at least approach only with great caution and spiritual preparation.

### **Natural and supernatural abilities**

For every personal, natural ability there is a corresponding divine sharing which is bestowed upon us by God. For example, there is natural clairvoyance and there is divine clairvoyance. The source of one is materiality (though subtle) and the source of the other is infinite consciousness. It has also been observed that the two do not go together. This is why a viable spiritual system usually cuts off all natural psychic faculties and powers rather than developing them. This is a blow to the ego, but in time, as the ego fades away, the soul comes into its own and is illumined by God Himself.

Our idea of growth, even on the physical level, is that of expansion, of pressing or moving outward and increasingly functioning in the external levels, whereas true spiritual growth is a turning and absorption inward, a dissolving rather than an accumulation, a divine "losing" rather than a delusive "getting." Therefore the wise seeker cuts off all desire for what he has hitherto known as growth and aspires to enter back into his eternal status from which he can then experience the glories of the divine kingdom, the inner kingdom of God. And it is God Who is the sole Actor or Doer in this matter. We do not attain—we enter into. Otherwise we exchange a small

delusion for a bigger delusion.

What, then, about the idea of becoming great and mighty in our evolution—becoming even the creators of worlds? Yes, it is indeed possible, and for those who wish it, it can come to pass. But it will delay their entry back into the Absolute. Those who truly love God can tolerate no delay, for love desires only the Beloved and is content with nothing else.

Within us all there is the divine urge back to the Infinite, back to God alone. But the egoic impulse is: “I don’t want to be just a human being, I want to be a god! I don’t want to die, I want to live forever! I don’t want to be unfulfilled, I want to be able to fulfill all my desires! I don’t want to be helplessly controlled by the forces of nature, I want to myself master the forces of nature!” So when the deluded hear of the saints working miracles, they say: “I want to be a saint, too!” But they do not really want to be a saint, they only want to have power like the saints. There is a great difference. The foolish want to demonstrate great powers and have others call them “Master,” but the wise wish to become Masters.

Let us repeat these short aphorisms to get an overview:

Kill out ambition.

Kill out desire of life.

Kill out desire of comfort.

Work as those work who are ambitious.

Kill out all sense of separateness.

Kill out desire for sensation.

Kill out the hunger for growth.”

The Masters plainly present the truths that the hawkers in the contemporary metaphysical carnival would never dare to even speak—if they knew them, which they do not. Why is this? Because the Masters are not part of the herd. They are never involved in “movements” and global endeavors, because they know that all spiritual progress is on a one-to-one basis.

**8. Yet stand alone and isolated, because nothing that is embodied, nothing that is conscious of separation, nothing that is out of the eternal, can aid you. Learn from sensation and observe it, because only so, can you commence the science of self-knowledge, and plant your foot on the first step of the ladder. Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open your soul to the eternal. But it must be the eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth. for in the one case you develop in the luxuriance of purity, in the other you harden by the forcible passion for personal stature.**

*Yet stand alone and isolated, because nothing that is embodied, nothing that is conscious of separation, nothing that is out of the eternal can aid you.* This is the real truth, the reason why in Sanskrit one of the words for salvation is *kaivalya*, which means literally, “one-aloneness.” For those engaged in the Great Work there can be no support, anywhere, no dependency on anything outside themselves. All they can do is seek out their Source and return there. They cannot “come to rest” at any point in relative existence. So the Master says: “Stand alone.” And not just alone among a crowd—because the truth is that among a billion people we are always alone—but alone and separate in heart and mind however surrounded we may be physically. This is well expressed by Edna Wheeler Wilcox in her poem, “Illusion.”

God and I in space alone

And nobody else in view.  
“And where are the people, O Lord!” I said.  
“The earth below and the sky o’erhead  
And the dead whom once I knew?”

“That was a dream,” God smiled and said,  
“A dream that seemed to be true,  
There were no people, living or dead,  
There was no earth and no sky o’erhead  
There was only Myself—and you.”

“Why do I feel no fear,” I asked,  
“Meeting you here in this way,  
For I have sinned I know full well,  
And there is heaven and there is hell,  
And is this the judgment day?”

“Nay, those were dreams,” the great God said,  
“Dreams that have ceased to be.  
There are no such things as fear or sin,  
There is no you—you have never been—  
There is nothing at all but Me.”

### **Eliminate dependence**

We have to be realistic about this aspect of spiritual life. If we lean on a crutch, when the crutch crumbles, we will fall. When the world falls apart, then we will fall apart with it. Whatever we have an affinity for will ultimately fail us.

Think of the questing spirits as meteorites flying through the universe. They may have been doing so, unhindered, for incalculable ages, but if they come too close to the earth and are drawn into its atmosphere, they are incinerated or else reduced to only a token of their original size and fall to earth, stopped in their flight. Therefore we must keep our distance from all that “is,” but in reality is not.

“Yet stand alone and isolated, because nothing that is embodied,...can aid you.” There is no physical entity that can be our help. Why? Because embodiment is the result of ignorance. This is why when Pythagoras’ students wanted to celebrate his birthday, he refused, saying: “The day of my birth is my shame. For if I had been a man of true knowledge I should not have needed to be born here on earth.”

This world in which we find ourself is the least and lowest in consciousness—in evolution. It is actually lower than the astral hells, because there the mind is much more awake and insightful as to why it has come there, whereas upon earth we are usually completely unaware as to the “why” of our incarnation here. In the astral hells we remember all the lives that have resulted in our ending up there, but upon the earth we usually do not even remember that we have had any previous existence at all. The astral hells are very meaningful to the people in them, but here on earth people understand nothing about themselves or it, including why they are here.

Nothing embodied can help us because embodiment is a veiling rather than a revealing. Therefore that which is embodied is that which is covered and hidden. This world is truly the world of the undead, the unalive. To be embodied is to be in the body. That is, the consciousness is confined to the body instead of centered in itself. In a sense, to be aware of anything besides our true Self as a spark of individualized



consciousness is to be unconscious while seemingly conscious. Externalized consciousness is to internalized consciousness what fool's gold is to the real item. We are truly lost. And only when we "come to ourselves" can there even be the possibility of our being saved or found.

Instead of being in our selves as we should be and working and evolving through conscious use of our vehicles of body, mind, etc., we are drawn out into the vehicles and lose our selves in exclusive awareness of them. We are like the hero in the old western films: when the stagecoach horses run away the man jumps into the middle of them and holds on, hoping to stop them. That is our situation exactly. We are no longer controlling and driving in an intelligent way, but have thrown ourselves right into the pounding hooves. And most of us get flattened by them from life to life. Instead of being masters of the bodies, the bodies are the masters of us.

By these few words the Master is telling us to realize that no external objects can help us in the Great Work of our liberation. That is, we are to use and exert force on them for our betterment—not expect them to affect us. For all power is within us, not outside us. "Nothing that is conscious of separation...can aid you." That includes our own egoic mind and intellect, what to speak of other people. Another person bound like us, drowning like us, can hardly save us.

Also, one of the favorite excuses to avoid spiritual life is to tell how "let down" or "hurt" or "disappointed" we have been in others. But if we follow this maxim we will not fall into such silliness. (For that is all it is, shameful and spineless silliness.) How often we hear people saying: "I used to go to church/temple/the ashram/the center/meditation, and they hurt me... they let me down... I became disillusioned," etc., etc., etc. Such people never sought God. They sought a group of people in which they could be one of the herd—or perhaps a leader of the herd. They sought for a group identity, a place of mutual ego support. The antidote to this (as well as all other) delusion is to fix our minds on God. Then we will not be let down or hurt. Considering how from life to life our own egos, minds, intellects, and bodies have done nothing but hurt and let us down, it is high time to separate from them and take refuge in the spirit!

### **True and false helpers**

Beware of "helpers"! There are many people whose egotism manifests in a deluded concept of themselves as teachers and uplifters of humanity. They wander around thrusting their supposed wisdom and assistance on whatever victims they can find. Many of them do great harm to those they "help." Who, then, can help us? Only those who see the divine unity in all things can help us. And I mean those who see the divine unity, not those who only believe or talk about it.

When a candle is lighted, other candles can be lit from it without the candle having to want to do so. Fire communicates fire. In the same way divine consciousness communicates itself from consciousness to consciousness. During my spiritual meanderings, especially in India, I met various grades of spiritual teachers. Many of them were advanced yogis whose auras were expanded far beyond their bodies. When I came into their presence I felt subtle electrical currents flowing all around me. In the presence of some of them I felt great upliftment emotionally. But except for one of them there was a common flaw: I was made keenly aware of them, but forgetful of myself. It was also evident that their consciousness was of a duality—themselves and those around them. Because of this, there was a desire on their part to effect a change in those around them. This desire was noble and benevolent, but still based on a sense of separation, of duality.

The greatest of those I met—Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh—was in another league

altogether. He was established in perfect unity with God—and therefore in perfect unity with those around him. Whenever I entered his presence his self-illumination communicated itself to me, and instead of being drawn out of myself in admiration of him, I found myself becoming intensely self-aware. In his presence I found my own consciousness changed. Rather than being transformed into a “groupie” I found myself strengthened in my endeavors for self-knowledge and spiritual freedom. Because of his unified vision, he did not have the attitude that the people around him needed his help, nor did he in any way evince a desire to influence or change people. Yet that is exactly what he did.

The sun does not need to think about giving light or heat. Its nature is to do so. In the same way those who are truly perfected in divine consciousness remain so in unbroken communion with the Infinite, never taking their eyes away from the One. Even when they move and speak with us they are doing so in that perfect consciousness, beholding us as we truly are: in God and of God. Since that vision is the only true one, it communicates itself to us in a mysterious way beyond intellect or emotion. Therefore the truly great and wise need never speak. They need only be.

The greatest philosopher-saint of India, Adi Shankaracharya, wrote: “How strange! the Master does not speak, but all the disciples’ questions are answered.” This is because the egoity of the Master is no more, and only divinity remains. In the spiritual Masters we behold a divine indifference. And because they simply are what they—and we—are, anyone who comes into their orbit has his own consciousness awakened—if they so desire and are sufficiently evolved to be awakened. (Those whose wills are turned away from light and truth will not be imposed on by the Masters, but can continue on as before. And this is as it should be.)

## **The Masters**

Many think that they would like to meet and even live with the Masters but it is not always so pleasant an experience, for the Masters, being themselves free from ego and knowing the ego as the anti-self within, do not deal with us on the egoic level, but only on the spiritual plane.

Most people who seek out the Masters have unfulfilled egos—especially spiritual egos, which are the worst of all—which they expect the Masters to soothe and please. Even though they know the ego must go, they usually want the Masters to give their ego the equivalent of a nice long “last meal of the condemned,” and then easily and painlessly dissolve their ego without their even knowing it or feeling it—or being changed by it! This of course is an absolute impossibility, being contrary to the nature of things—including that of the ego.

The Masters will not placate or coddle our egos. Rather, they either ignore their demands or they ruthlessly go after them to rout them and destroy them. But this can only be done with our cooperation. To assist at one’s own surgery without anesthesia is not an easy thing. But if we would gain benefit from association with the Masters that is exactly what must be done. Otherwise we will only turn away from the Masters in indignation accusing them of being without love or understanding—even of being egotistical!

The spiritually diseased have an obsessive insistence that saints and masters should be “childlike”—that is, too naive to see through their ego-gaming. They have forgotten how devastatingly insightful and candid children can be. The Masters cannot be coerced into playing the little mind-games at which we excel. They will not “play house” with our egos and agree to be our Mommy, our Daddy, our Baby, or—worst of all—our Lover. They will be the best and truest friends that our immortal spirits can

ever have. But to be that, they will have to also be the most implacable enemies that our egos can ever have. So if we identify with our spirit we will call them friend, but if we identify with our ego we will call them enemy.

The Masters only love God. Therefore they only love the God in us. The rest is nothing to them, though they will help us to get rid of all in us that is not God, because that “everything else” destroys us by making us forget our real nature. Even the company of saints and angels would be detrimental to us if it made us forget what we really are. Such is the knowledge of the Masters, and since they love us in God they will not settle for giving us anything but the best they have to give: freedom from ego and all that goes along with it.

But we cannot become dependent even on the Masters, for they cannot “do it” for us, but can only point out the way. The Masters despise such dependency as being detrimental to us, knowing that our spiritual evolution is exclusively between us and God. Because of this, the Master who inspired *Light On The Path* is exhorting us to never place our trust or hope in anything outside ourselves in the realm of separation. Instead, we are to base our spiritual quest on that which is within, where there is divine unity, because “nothing that is out of the eternal can aid you.”

### **Teaching ourselves**

“Learn from sensation and observe it, because only so, can you commence the science of self-knowledge.” By “sensation” is meant any perceptions that enter our consciousness, whether physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual. Thoughts and movements of the will are sensations just as much as the messages of the physical senses. We are told to put our minds on God and to ignore all else. Now we are being told to observe and learn from sensations which are external to us. But this is not a contradiction, for we are not to immerse ourselves in sensations, but to objectively observe them only. And this is accomplished through keeping our consciousness centered in the spirit. That is, we “sit” in pure awareness and observe the sensations that are arising. It is not inappropriate to say that we use our awareness as a kind of lens through which we focus on external phenomena. It is a divine eye through which we perceive what is outside us. But through It we always remain inside and safe. Since even our perceptions of externals are really interior experiences of the modifications of the energy field of the mind, we can come to comprehend the ways of our mind through observation. Once we do this we shall no longer be fooled by its tricky ploys. We must learn to interpret what arises around us in the motion picture of life.

Since all that happens to us is an echoing back of forces set in motion by us in the past, it should be evident that the present reveals the character of our past—and therefore of our mind and will. For all actions require thought and will as their basis. Though we think we are seeing “the world,” we are really seeing our own psychic face. The world is like a musical instrument—what we hear is what we ourselves are producing. When Buddha—and later, Jesus—taught that we should do to others the things we would have done to us, he was stating a fact of life. What we do to others shall be done in turn to us. So what is being done to us now is what we have done to others in the past. If we do not like it, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Although others may be the instruments of manifestation, in reality everything that is done to us is really being done by us to ourselves. We are slapped only because we have slapped in the past and now that seed is coming to fruition as a slap in the present. We are wronged only because we have wronged others. If we do not like our present, then we must watch what we are doing now and see that we do not keep sowing the seeds whose fruits we do not like.

There is no one to blame but ourselves regarding whatever happens to us. It is a bitter pill to accept full responsibility for our lives and deeds, but it must be done if we would intelligently progress in any aspect of life. How often we hear people blaming environment, parents, or peers for their problems and their “hurts.” But that is self-deception. We alone are the ones to indict.

If, then, we will carefully observe and analyze our daily experiences, both internal and external, we can come to some intelligent diagnosis of where we are “at” spiritually. The world around us is a play, but we are the authors, and our minds and intentions are revealed as it unfolds. Clear-sighted understanding of our surroundings will result in understanding of ourselves. Our minds must be carefully observed since they are the instruments of the lying ego. We need not believe our minds, but we must observe them. Our minds are often liars, but behind the lies is the truth. We must learn to interpret the mind and its antics, not necessarily accept or believe them. When we can do this, the mind, like the world, will become a conveyer of truth to us, even though indirectly.

The world is ultimately not real. Anyone can say that, but to perceive it is quite another matter altogether. Silk flowers can look absolutely real, but close scrutiny shows otherwise. Similarly, by watching the world carefully we will come to see both what it is not and what it is. The Master says to observe and learn, not give in to it, believe it, accept it, and be pushed around by it. This is also true of the internal world, especially the world of mind and emotion. In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, one of the essential requisites for successful spiritual life is *swadhyaya*, which means self (swa) study (*adhyaya*). Here the word “self” refers to the wrappings of the spirit, not the spirit itself. The most important of the wrappers is the mind. If we study it, as well as our emotions, etc., we will see their natural folly and illusory character. More to the point, we need to realize their frequent treachery and unreliability.

Our ego, mind, emotions, intellect, and desires are often our implacable enemies. Jesus had this in mind when He said: “A man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:36). For some people, because of their karma, their earthly family or friends may be inimical to their spiritual progress. But in the more psychological sense—that our “household” consists of our own inner faculties—it is usually true for everyone. Our bodies, emotions, senses, intellect, and desires can militate against our progress and with fiendish genius expend themselves in endeavors to ruin our spiritual life. Now, they have no objection to fake religious or spiritual life—they will even push us toward it. But they shall literally war to the death against our true spiritual progress. We must see through them and know them for what they are—and are not. For our inner household is the hardest army of all to resist and conquer.

### **Press forward**

*So must you press forward to open your soul to the eternal. But it must be the eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth. For in the one case you develop in the luxuriance of purity, in the other you harden by the forcible passion for personal stature.*

We must not misunderstand: in their “normal” state our body, emotions, mind, intellect, and will cannot be opened to the eternal, for they are bars to our attainment of the eternal. When purified and elevated they can be instruments for our growth into the eternal, but they shall be left behind at the gates of eternity. As the Upanishads say, God is “that from which the mind and the senses turn back.” In other words, they can only go so far, and then no more. When Saint Thomas Aquinas in his poem uses the term “*sensuum defectui*,” he means that in the presence of the eternal the senses fade

away and are transcended. So in time we press forward and beyond them to the eternal. Therefore our process of meditation need cannot involve these things which will ultimately be turned away from the door of God. From the beginning our meditation is formless, without concept, without intellection, focused on the pure consciousness within.

We must press forward to open our spirits to the eternal because we have become enclosed, locked in the various energy bodies. The simile is often given of sea water that is separated from the sea by being enclosed in bottles. Although the separation may last for aeons, the moment the bottle is opened or broken, the water within will regain its unity with the greater body of water. The bottled water is the individual spirit and the sea is the Infinite Spirit, God. After ages of confinement we now want to break these jars and let our consciousness participate in the life of Infinity.

Our spirits can be opened to the eternal alone—to nothing else. One purpose of our energy body-bottles is to keep the spirit untouched by the temporal state of existence. For this reason Solomon describes the spirit as an enclosed garden and a sealed fountain (Song of Solomon 4:12). The spirit is ever virgin, betrothed to God alone, and within this virgin spirit, finite though it be, the infinite consciousness can be enclosed and experienced as its very own.

We cause confusion and suffering for ourselves by trying to open our spirits to things other than God. We are trying to get our spirits to rest where there is no rest, for the eternal alone is the destiny of the spirit. “But it must be the eternal that draws forth,” declares the Master. Although we say that the plant breaks through the earth, we can equally say that the sun draws it from the earth. So “it must be the eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth.”

### **Only the Eternal**

Only the eternal, then, can produce spiritual life. As plants are made to grow by the light and heat of the sun, so by continually centering our awareness in consciousness, in spirit, we are drawn upwards. It is both an action by us and an action upon us. In *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Cyrano tells a man that he has flown to the moon by standing on an iron disk and throwing a magnet out in front of the disk. The magnet would then draw the disk to itself. By repeatedly tossing the magnet ahead of the disk he was able to propel himself to the moon. Absurd as it might be in *Cyrano*, that is what we are doing in meditation. We are entering into Spirit Consciousness, and That alone is acting upon us.

We should note that the Master says that it is the Eternal which we must use. This informs us that the Eternal can be an object. “For in the one case you develop in the luxuriance of purity.” That is, the Divine, Which is all-pure, all light, and stainless, develops in this abundance of Presence, which we produce through meditation. However, “in the other you harden by the forcible passion for personal stature.”

Through the one we want to experience infinity so we can love God. We want to reach out to embrace God. On the other side, the ego says: “I want to be greater because I want to be master.” The spirit desires to be infinite so it can be an infinite servant. It wants to be infinite so it can give infinitely back to God the love God gives to it. The ego wants to be infinite so it can receive infinity. The spirit wants to receive to give back. The ego wants only to receive, to enjoy God in the childish manner of self-gratification. To the ego God is a cosmic lollipop to lick. The spirit of course rejoices in God, but wishes to become perfect so God can rejoice in it. The spirit wishes to become a flawless mirror in which God can behold His own beauty. The ego is incapable of such aspirations, however nobly it may speak. So the ego says: “I would be

free, I would be unrestrained, I would have no bonds so I can be the master to do what I want.” Of course it likes to say: “There is no God but me, there is no God beyond me. And when I attain the highest, I will myself be the Infinite. I will be that. I will be the sum of all that is.” Such is the ideal of the ego.

What, then, is the purpose of finding God? What is it that the spirit truly desires? The fundamental urge of the spirit is to give itself as an offering unto—and into—God, to merge with God. The spirit has nothing else but itself to give, to totally lose the thought of “I” and be absorbed completely in the thought of “Thou.”

The spirit knows that it is the drop and that God is the ocean, but the ego will not learn this. The ego will swear: “I am the ocean, there is no God beyond me.” This it must do for survival, for the ego dies in the attainment of spiritual transcendence, whereas the spirit comes to life.

When we feel an aspiration to know God we must first discover the source of the aspiration, for the ego can aspire to godhood just as the spirit can. This is why Sri Ramana Maharshi used to continually challenge seekers to discover who was doing the seeking. The ego would like to know God in hope of gaining for itself the powers and glory of God.

### **The source of our searching**

All the evils done in the name of religion are continually being pointed out by those who hope to thereby excuse themselves from following a legitimate spiritual path which involves humility and obedience—both deadly poisons to the ego. But what they (willingly) do not realize is that religion is of two kinds: ego-motivated and spirit-motivated. The fruits of the two will be utterly different. This is why in religion we have to be very careful and inquire of ourselves: “Who is being religious? Who is ‘on the path’? Who is it that is seeking God?” In most people it is the ego itself that is seeking. But since it would be dissolved if it really came into contact with God, it veers off and creates a false path and a false god. Alternately, it rebels or gives up, and falls back. Only the spirit can go all the way to God.

In the very beginning of our spiritual search we should ask ourselves: “Do my seemingly spiritual impulses come from me—my spirit—or do they come from my ego?” The wise take a sober look at the world and see that it is filled with suffering, but they do not seek God for the sake of cessation of that suffering. If they do begin with that motive they will soon discover that spiritual life, too, can be very painful, that the price they have to pay for the cessation of suffering is very excruciating. Then they (hopefully) learn to say: “I do not care about pain. Although I suffer, let me draw near to God.” Then they shall have conquered pain, and suffering will cease. This is part of the paradoxical nature of spiritual life. Those who are willing to suffer will be freed from suffering. Those who are willing to die shall live. Those who are willing to sacrifice shall be rewarded. Those who are willing to serve shall rule. Those who are willing to be small shall become great. Those who are willing to be finite shall become infinite.

Many saints have suffered greatly in their search because they started out with a motive for comfort rather than God. Those who desired ease were required to struggle. Those who wanted material abundance had to learn to love poverty. This, too, is part of the divine, therapeutic paradox. Since God is love, the only motive for seeking God is love. We must be prepared for severe tests in our spiritual life, for thereby the quality and nature of our aspiration, our love, is determined.

The Master also points out that if our seeking comes from the ego it will cause us to be “hardened” and locked even more into our egoity, reducing our spiritual pursuit

to just another passion. This is why “religious” people hate and harm one another, going into hysteria at any disagreement with their ideas and ways, striking out at “heresy” and “heretics.” Or they may simply run away the moment they hear something they do not like or agree with, and try to block the offending idea or individual out of their minds. This latter is the more “mellow” reaction of New Age egos.

Those whose religious involvement comes from the spirit are aware that intellectual concepts count for very little, in fact they know that any philosophical concept is imperfect and never a statement of absolute truth. Further, they know that true spiritual life manifests as a result of evolution—never from intellectual conviction. Therefore, no outside influence can be brought to bear on another’s spiritual life. The true spiritual seeker must always be independent and free. Although discipline and even obedience are essential in spiritual life, they must be voluntary, never imposed.

Those who are dominated by the ego say: “Never bring into my world something I do not like or approve of.” Naturally, they consider God to be just like them and project the same egoic motivations and reactions onto Him. They then define sin as something that angers or offends God. A thing is sinful simply because God dislikes it. The realization that sin and virtue are only in relation to what keeps us away from God and what aids us in reaching Him is simply beyond them since they can only impute selfish attitudes and motives to God. They cannot understand that neither our sin nor our virtue mean anything to God because they are only momentary appearances. Nor can they really believe that God never changes in either His relationship to us or His attitude toward us. And the realization that God never deals with us on the egoic level is simply too devastating for them to even consider, much less accept.

### **9. Desire only that which is within you.**

That which is real, which is infinite, is within; that which is finite—is false and illusory—is outside. In truth we can never see that which is outside, but only what is inside. So we should seek only that which is within, for God Himself is within us as the Life of our life, the Spirit of our spirit.

### **10. Desire only that which is beyond you.**

A basic flaw of our present status is the desire to dig in and stay in one spot, mistaking this for peace and security. Since this is not really possible, we either deceive ourselves or actively suffer. We must keep pressing ever onward, never content with the attainment of the moment. In spiritual life we need to be like Rockefeller. When he was asked how much money it would take to satisfy him, he replied: “Just a little more.” We must never be satisfied with anything less than the Absolute.

Sri Ramakrishna often told of the woodcutter who was told by a wandering monk: “Go on further into the forest.” He did so, and found a deposit of iron ore. At first he was elated, planning how to mine it, but then he remembered that the monk had said to go on, not just to find something and stop. So he went further and found a copper mine. Keeping on, he found a silver mine, a gold mine, and finally a place with many gems in the earth. All this he gained because he did not stop moving on.

Instead of being like little Jack Homer with the plum on his thumb, we must keep asking: “What next? What more?” There is a divine greed, a divine ambition, and we must cultivate it. We are capable of possessing all the worlds—from lowest to highest—but still there will remain something more. There is That which lies beyond all worlds, beyond all that “is” in a relative sense. Nevertheless it can be attained by those who apply themselves wholeheartedly.

The emanation of all the worlds occurs in cycles of projection and withdrawal. Why is this? Why has not the realm of relativity been once sent forth and maintained eternally? The cyclic process is necessary because the individual consciousnesses get caught in the higher states of being. Since there is no suffering there, and since those realms are endlessly fascinating, it is possible for those who evolve to those states to delay their progress in exploration of the seemingly infinite possibilities accessible to them. Therefore even those worlds must be periodically dissolved in order to remind them of their higher Goal, to unsettle them and stimulate them to move onward.

God meditates on us, and we meditate on Him, and in time the two become One. God seeks us, and we seek Him, and at last we “find” one another. God reaches for us, and we reach for Him, and eventually we embrace one another. God in us, and we in Him, our ultimate unity is attained. It is because God seeks us that we seek Him. He having chosen us, we choose Him. Therefore the questing spirit should never doubt or despair. Our search for Him is but a mirroring of His search for us. And God never fails in His intentions. The entire universe has but one purpose: our return to God.

### **11. Desire only that which is unattainable.**

This has really already been covered. We can attain through evolution all the worlds but we cannot attain the status of the infinite God. However, we can so purify and evolve ourselves that we become capable of sharing in the Infinite Consciousness, of attaining the Unattainable. And that alone is worthy of being desired by us.

We need to stop and take another look back at the three “desire” admonitions: “Desire only that which is within you. Desire only that which is beyond you. Desire only that which is unattainable.” Although they may sound like Renzai Zen Buddhist koans, they hold a very serious meaning that is the key to success in sustaining spiritual endeavor.

### **12. For within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed upon the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere. It is beyond you; because when you reach it you have lost yourself. It is unattainable, because it for ever recedes. You will enter the light, but you will never touch the flame.**

*For within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed upon the Path.* Within us is this Divine Light; in us alone is the means to see our way out of darkness. If we look outside, we will find only delusive darkness—in the ultimate sense, since it is a mere appearance and nothing more—and if we live and walk in that outer darkness, we shall stumble and fall. It is inevitable. But if we live inside, centering our awareness within, then we and our path will be illumined, for there is no other light possible in this or any other world.

In Sanskrit the state of enlightenment is called *swayamprakash*—being self-illumined—for the spirit, the true Self, is Light. Buddha is described in Buddhist texts as self-illumined, as well. The Light of the World is not in the world at all! It is in us. We must realize and experience this if we would not live in darkness. This inner light is in truth “the only light that can be shed upon the Path.”

It is only natural that as intellectually developed beings we should enjoy hearing and reading about spiritual subjects. This does help in our spiritual quest. But when it comes to real evolution, which is the walking of the Path, then we must rely upon the inner light alone. If we attempt to live our spiritual life solely through the intellect we will become hopelessly entangled. This is especially true since spiritual realities lie mostly outside the scope of the intellect and therefore often appear absurd or



contradictory within its context.

Also, if we are not careful we will substitute intellectualization about spiritual life for spiritual life itself. This is especially true in the West. There is a parable about a group of “seekers” who were confronted by two paths. Each had a sign and an arrow pointing along it. One sign said: “The way to God.” The other said: “The way to a discussion about God.” Everybody went to the discussion! This is what happens when we become so acclimatized to the cage of the intellect that we are like the imprisoned bird that is afraid to venture beyond its bars.

We can “reason” ourselves out of and into just about anything—except spiritual life. When it comes to that, we must utilize the inner light of our spiritual consciousness. That alone reveals the Path. Therefore we must not fall into the dangerous practice of mind-gaming, for many people mind-game themselves right out of spiritual life. “Since we are all God right now, what is the need to do anything?” is one of the favorite exit lines.

### **We are on our own**

Most importantly, another person's light cannot illumine our path. Once a man went to consult a saint, and when leaving asked him to pray for him. The saint replied: “No. I cannot eat for you, or breathe for you, and neither can I pray for you. That you must do for yourself.”

We can see only through our own eyes, not those of another. Only false teachers try to impose on us their vision of things, to make us see as they see. True teachers give us the means to open our own inner vision and see for ourselves. They may tell us how they see a thing, but never with the idea of making us see it in the same way. Also, even if we come to realize that our view is imperfect or incorrect, we can only set about correcting it—we must not deny the way we presently see things. There is an account of a Zen master who always taught: The Buddha is the Mind. But one day he called a monk and told him to go to a disciple who was living far away as a hermit and tell him that he now understood differently: No Buddha, No Mind. So the monk hastened away and told the hermit about the new understanding. “Well,” said the hermit, “I still say The Buddha is the Mind.” Back rushed the monk to “tell on” him. But when he relayed the incident the master smiled happily and said: “I see he has gained maturity.” He had integrity, too.

There is no place in spiritual life for an unquestioning cult-slave mentality. And this occurs in Eastern religion just as much as in Western religion, the difference being that in the East they are not as coercive, hostile, and threatening. One time I heard an American ask his guru: “What do we believe about that?” How absurd! He obviously did not believe anything about the question, so “we” did not believe anything at all. There is nothing wrong in asking what a person's belief is, or what a scripture teaches, but to ask with the intention to unthinkingly accept whatever will be said is a crime against ourselves and truth.

We must light up the inner light. We must be like the Hermit of the Ninth Major Arcanum of the Tarot in the Waite deck. He is holding aloft the lamp in which shines the six-pointed star, the symbol of the union of human and divine consciousness. Yet, the Hermit does not peer outward into the darkness, but stands with bowed head and closed eyes, his consciousness turned within. He is seeing with the inner light which the lamp symbolizes.

### **Keep looking**

*If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere.* If in the

beginning we cannot perceive the Light, we keep on looking within through meditation, where everything is present. All illumination is there, although we are not perceiving it. When we go from the light into a darkened room, or into the light from a dark place, at first we cannot see anything. But gradually our eyes adjust and we see everything. So in time we will see all. Our inner eye needs adjustment, attunement, and healing from what is called in Sanskrit *ajñana tamira*, the glaucoma of ignorance. Also, the cataracts of illusion and material consciousness must be removed before we can see truly. And, we must face it, sometimes we do not see because we are not really looking.

*It is beyond you; because when you reach it you have lost yourself.* “You” and “yourself” do not refer to the true Self, our immortal spirit, but to the false ego that has usurped the place of the true “us,” or either the mistaken experience of our true Self as separate from God. Here, too, is a clue as to why we may be seeing only darkness when we look for the light. We may be looking through the eyes of our blind egos which are incapable of seeing the light. There is no adjustment or healing for the ego—it must go. Also, we may be looking at the ego itself, which is the quintessence of darkness.

When the sun is in the sky many objects shine, even blindingly. But when the sun sets, there is only darkness, for in those objects there is no light. Even though the body, emotions, mind, intellect, etc., can reflect the light of life, it is a mistake to seek for that light in them. Our spirits are the suns that lend temporary illumination to the lesser parts of our present being—parts that in time shall be discarded for higher consciousness. Therefore we must cultivate spiritual consciousness.

We seek God because God is drawing us to Himself. We, being egotistical, attribute that action to ourselves and say: “Oh, I am seeking God,” whereas in reality we are just answering the call. The classical Sanskrit definition of meditation is: “The unceasing flow of the mind toward God.” When we get beyond ourselves (or, more accurately, our unelves), then we will reach the Light. It will do no good just to complain that we do not see the light—we must get out of the darkness of our ignorance and ego into the light. Then there will be a possibility of seeing.

In the Song of Solomon the soul says: “I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth” (Song of Solomon 3:1-4). Our physical bodies are the city, the streets and squares are the subtle bodies, and the watchmen are the senses, gross and subtle, physical and astral. The senses, mind, and intellect have never seen God, nor can they. But when we go beyond them all, we shall find our spirits; and there, one with them, shall we find God. When we find ourselves we find God, for He is one with us. There is an eternal unity and an eternal duality. This is why Jesus said: “I and the father are one” (John 10:30), not: “I and the father are the same,” or “I am the father.” Meditation takes us out of the little phony “I” and establishes us in the consciousness of God. And in that consciousness we come to know ourselves in God. We shall know ourselves with Divine Knowing.

### **Unattainable and untouchable**

*It is unattainable, because it for ever recedes. You will enter the light, but you will never touch the flame.* This is because all “hands”—the body vehicles with which we would touch or which would act as an intermediary for some kind of contact—will have long ago been transcended. We will have entered into and become the light, therefore

it will never be an object. We will behold and possess it within—never outside.

“It is unattainable because it for ever recedes.” We can get the false light right away through a little bit of yoga or some other psychic exercise, and congratulate ourselves on our exalted state, confident that we need attain nothing or “go” anywhere. But that is the lying light. The true light keeps saying: “Take a step more; come on a little further.” If we are ego-centered we may become frustrated and angry at the divine elusiveness. But if we keep following its drawing of us, the further it draws us the more the veils of illusion will drop away. Then at last there will be no more veils, only the Light. What, then, will be left to lay hold on it? For we shall have entered into and become one with It.

There is no place in this for the ego, which cannot by its very nature ascend to that status. In the ego-oriented systems there is much talk about the descent of higher consciousness. This is indeed true, but such descents mean nothing unless they motivate us to ascend to the Source, which alone is salvation. We go higher and higher until the distinctions of higher and lower are left far behind along with the “who” that was ascending. What will then remain? That which has always been there: the pure spirit.

The “descent” into matter and our subsequent evolution is really only a matter of ideation. It is impossible for us to “go” anywhere since space and time are only appearances, not realities. But we have fallen into the ideational exercise and come to believe that it is really “going on” and that we have fallen away from God in a spatial sense.

Consider how it is when we watch a motion picture, a television story, or a play in a theatre. Willingly we lay aside our knowledge that it is all false—merely a pretence—and begin reacting to what we see. We become amused, afraid, anxious, indignant, happy, relieved, disgusted, etc., moving through a spectrum of reactions triggered off by what we are observing. Knowing it is fantasy we yet willingly respond to it as reality. All of creation, from highest to lowest, is but a projection of consciousness, a dream of the infinite. Yet we have allowed ourselves to become convinced of its reality and become drawn right into the midst of it, no longer able to draw back and see it as it is and as it is not.

### **13. Desire power ardently.**

The Path of Power has already been referred to. The next directive, then, is: “Desire power ardently.” What is the power we should seek? The power to seek God. What is wanted is the power to run faster to the Goal, to intensify our efforts. The intensity of desire and will needed to carry us to God would burn an ordinary person to a cinder. We have to accustom ourselves to increasing degrees of spiritual fervor, like a flyer or mountain climber who acclimatizes himself to higher and higher heights.

Once we have begun to be drawn toward the goal, we yearn for power to run after the prize. Because of this need for power we then begin to increase and conserve our personal power by means of various disciplines in thought and deed. It is here that the observance of the “ten commandments of yoga”—yama and niyama—is so important. (See *The Foundations of Yoga*.)

We also begin to simplify our life so we can direct all our activity toward finding God. It is not external power we need, but internal power. For it is the inner power that impels us onward, toward the Light. We must seek empowerment to develop the requisite tenacity of will, for much—if not all—lies in the will. On every level we strive to become more and more self-contained so we can gather the power to leap into the Infinite.

Though it may not seem so at first sight, self-respect and integrity are also part of this conservation of power. If we look around us we will see that many people who profess high ideals readily lay aside those ideals if sufficient reward or punishment is placed before them. This is why the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (whose *Discourses* are of great value for the seeker) challenged his hearers to consider at what price they would sell their choice and will. Then, having discovered what they would “sell out” for, they should strive to become indifferent to it so they would never sell themselves for any reason, whether gain or loss. This is why many spiritual seekers prefer to be self-employed—so they need never compromise their principles for the sake of material gain.

We are to desire this power ardently—flamingly, even. This desire will consume all that which controverts it so the person will be single in will and act. In a sense, it must consume us, but it is the fire in which the Phoenix of the immortal spirit is manifested. Instead of death, it brings us life.

Part of Hindu worship consists of offering burning camphor. This is because camphor burns without leaving a residue—is totally consumed. So also in our desire all must be consumed except That which is the object of our desire. The energies of our bodies, gross and subtle, are consumed in the race for the Infinite. This being so, only those who are willing to be so consumed should begin the race. Nothing can be held back—that fire consumes all. That is why Jesus warns us: “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33).

#### **14. Desire peace fervently.**

How can there be peace? By moving the center of our consciousness from the realm of continual change that is this world and directing it toward that ever-receding goal. Just as a cease-fire is not a real peace, so true inner peace is not the simple cessation of agitation or change, but the ending of the *possibility* of agitation and change. It is achieved by going beyond all that is capable of change. That alone is peace. Deafness should not be mistaken for silence. That is, the peace spoken of here is not a mere non-experiencing of any pain or agitation; it is being established in that state where pain and agitation simply do not exist.

#### **15. Desire possessions above all.**

**16. But those possessions must belong to the pure spirit only, and be possessed therefore by all pure spirits equally, and thus be the especial property of the whole only when united. Hunger for such possessions, as can be held by the pure soul, that you may accumulate wealth for that united spirit of life which is your only true self. The peace you shall desire is that sacred peace which nothing can disturb, and in which the soul grows as does the holy flower upon the still lagoons. And that power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.**

*But those possessions must belong to the pure spirit only, and be possessed therefore by all pure spirits equally, and thus be the especial property of the whole only when united.* It is God we must desire. Why, then, does the Master say “possessions”? Because everything that is has come out of God, and when we find God we find everything.

Some people asked a saint about what would remain once a person had transcended relativity, and were told: “Nothing is lost there.” So we leave everything behind, only to find it in the One. Here in relativity we cannot really possess anything because of the laws of change and dissolution. Moreover, instead of our possessing

things, they begin to possess and bind us. But when we give them up, turn our back on them, and leave them behind, we will come to truly possess them in the possessing of God, for God wills to share all things with us and to say: “Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine” (Luke 15:31).

When we enter the Infinite, we will find everything there, we shall have gotten out of the mirror into the real thing. Right now we are living in the movie screen thinking that it is the real world. We have been afraid to move out into the light that is projected on the screen, thinking that we would become nothing. But if we keep on going further into the light, right to its very source, we will find that the whole “picture” is there, and has been all along.

To “desire possessions above all” is to desire Infinity, to desire to possess omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. In transcending the universe we shall encompass it. But first we must get out of it. Those who hold to it are the ones who lose it, but those who give it up come to possess it. Here in the realm of relativity we are grasping for mere reflections, trying to pull the moon out of a lake by casting in a net.

The desired possessions are those things which belong only to the purified spirit when it returns to the Divine Source. All will possess them equally, for there God is all in all. God shall be in us, not outside of us. We shall be with Him in the depths of our own being, just as we are even now in the depths of His being. And each of us shall possess the totality of God.

### **The Maharasa**

When Krishna was a child, those who loved Him used to go out with Him into the forests, and as He would play the flute they would dance around Him. But one time each dancer found that Krishna was dancing with him. That is, there were as many Krishnas in the circle as there were dancers. So each one experienced dancing alone with Krishna. Each one had all of Him. This is called the *Maharasa*, the Supreme Sweetness, each individual possessing all of God.

In possessing God we shall possess all that has ever been or ever will be. No need to wonder if we shall be bored! All creations and their history will be there. All that has ever been known or thought, both wise and foolish, will be there, every form that has ever existed will be there, every work of art, poor, mediocre, and wonderful, every piece of music ever written—not just in this creation, but in all previous and subsequent ones, will be there. If we are so minded, we will have a lot to explore, and a lot to look at.

We must engage in divine greed, not being satisfied with this one little universe, but wanting them all in God. If we want them in and of themselves then we cannot have them. We should desire them because they are His manifestations and in having them we have Him, in beholding them, we behold Him. Behind all, He alone is.

But only those who “give up” will gain. The “pure soul” means one that is clear and divested of all these bodies, “and thus be the especial property of the whole only when united.” When we are one with God, and one with one another, then we will have it all.

In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna says: “I am all that a man may desire without transgressing the law of his nature” (Bhagavad Gita 7:11). We can—and should—desire this Divine Thing, this Divine Glory, this Divine All-possessiveness, this Divine Wealth, this Divine Kingdom. We are to hunger for it, but at the same time lose our hunger for all other things. In other words: distinguish those things, and hunger for them alone.

*Hunger for such possessions, as can be held by the pure soul, that you may accumulate wealth for that united spirit of life which is your only true self.* By this is meant the Divine

Wealth of spiritual perceptions in the highest levels of our being—not in that which is relative and time-space bound, but in that which is beyond it. In this way we shall be creating a karma for entry into the transcendent realms of existence, into the possession of the All.

*The peace you shall desire is that sacred peace which nothing can disturb, and in which the soul grows as does the holy flower upon the still lagoons.* How much do we hear about peace in our modern times when there is less peace than ever before. And how violent are those who demand peace. The louder they yell the word, the less of the real thing there is. But it is not political peace the Master is speaking of, but “that sacred peace which nothing can disturb, and in which the soul grows as does the holy flower upon the still lagoons.”

The holy flower referred to is the lotus, which in the East has for ages symbolized enlightenment and the enlightened soul. This lotus-peace is a sacred peace which nothing can disturb. Nothing can disturb it because it exists in that realm where “things” simply do not exist, where there is no “other” of any kind, but only unity. It exists in the core of our being where there is nothing else but God—which is why the Master says it is sacred.

### **The divine lotus**

The lotus grows “upon the still lagoons.” All is at rest, yet down in the invisible depths the seed germinates and begins to grow. Down there all is mud and darkness, but the seed has a destiny for the light. It pushes up from the mud and begins the upward journey, growing in a spiral motion, in a form of cycles. Then it emerges onto the surface of the water in the full light of the sun where it blossoms in perfect beauty. The mud of its origin, and even its stalk, is ugly. Yet, from that ugliness proceeds beauty, a beauty that can manifest only outside of the water.

In silence in the depths of our being, the Divine Seed, the Holy Word, grows, lifts the consciousness higher and higher in evolution until the field of relativity (“water”) is transcended and Divine Consciousness blossoms forth.

*And that power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.* Power that makes us appear as nothing! If it was earthly power, we would be considered great by men of earth, but the masters are not in their world, wielding earthly power, but live in the realm of God, wielding the power of God. However great the miracles of the saints may be, they remain unknown to the world, except to be mocked or denied by it—especially in the West. That is because the saints live in the spirit, and the world lives in the ego. Those in the ego consider the world of the spirit unreal, whereas those in the spirit know the ego and its world are unreal.

### **Divine invisibility**

That power which enables us to be alone with God, even though in the world, makes us invisible to the world. Some of the greatest Masters on earth have come in secret, lived in secret, and departed in secret. This is true even now. There are people who are living next door to immortal Masters and will never know it.

The power we should covet is that which will make us appear as nothing in the eyes of men. Why? Because the outer eyes of men only see matter, and their inner eyes see only ego. If, then, there is nothing in us of earth and ego, how will they see us? This is why earth-bound people meet teachers of only middling evolution, who still have plenty of ego and ignorance, and are deeply impressed with them and just adore them. Then they will meet a truly evolved person and do not give him a second thought, except maybe to remark to someone how unimpressed they were. The lives of saints

are filled with accounts of people who came to meet them and then refused to believe they were the saints they had heard so much about. Often they actually despise them. "That old fool!" they comment.

Pilgrims used to make long journeys to Zagorsk to meet Saint Sergius of Radonezh. They would ask one of the monks where the abbot (Saint Sergius) was, and when he was pointed out to them, they would become angry and say: "Quit trying to make a fool of me. That old man cannot be the abbot! Now which one is he, really?"

In Egypt a translator for the Coptic Patriarchate told me that once a large group of Protestant theological students came from Germany to see Pope Shenouda. The Pope came in wearing his simple monastic clothes as usual and spoke to them, answering questions, for over an hour. Then he excused himself and left. The group then asked the translator: "When do we meet the Pope?" The translator told them they had just been speaking to him. They objected, saying: "That old man was nice, but he could not be the Pope." When the translator and others assured them that they had truly met the Pope, they became angry and began to shout: "Don't you think we are good enough to meet your Pope? Do you think we are so stupid that you can pass that old man off on us as the Pope?" Only when some of the bishops came and solemnly swore to them that "that old man" really was the Pope would they accept it.

People used to come to see Sri Ramakrishna, and assuming from his simple demeanor and dress that he was a servant, they would call out: "Hey, you, tell me where the Paramhansa lives!" He would say: "Here in this room." In they would go, and He would come in another door and sit down. How amazed they would be. On occasion such people even made him carry things they had brought to present to "the saint." In contrast, a man came to meet Sri Ramakrishna who had seen Jesus in a vision and become a Christian. After being some time with Sri Ramakrishna he said: "I see in you exactly what I saw in Jesus."

On occasion, though, evil people hate the saints on sight, which is why the master tells us to desire the power that will make us seem like nothing to them. Then they will leave us alone.

We can only gauge the spiritual status of others from our own status. Those who are wandering in the maze of earthly delusion cannot in any way sense or comprehend those who are out of the game and home free.

Who but God is egoless enough to be as nothing in the eyes of the ignorant, yet love and bless them? So are His saints, who are His perfect images. The Bible says that we are strangers and pilgrims (I Peter 2:11). Therefore we must live like strangers and pilgrims, estranging ourselves from this world by snapping the bonds which we have ignorantly formed with it. Does not the world utterly disregard God? How many in the world strut around, saying: "We don't see the need for God to exist," "God has been created by man," "Man creates God in his own image," and such-like platitudes. But God continues to love and believe in them. This is the anonymity we must desire.

## **17. Seek out the way.**

Seek out the way—for there *is* a way. One of the basic misconceptions that many Westerners have about reincarnation is the idea that we need do nothing specific to accomplish our personal evolution—that we need only be born over and over again, learning from each life and thereby becoming increasingly intelligent and creative. And in the meantime we can have everything we want—either in one life or in another. In other words, rebirth is seen as a gigantic cycle of evolutionary self-indulgence.

The truth is, through our ignorance and misapplication of our divine powers, we have turned this world into a prison and each birth into a sentence of imprisonment. Of

course, just as in civil prisons very wealthy people often furnish their cells with every luxury and live there in complete comfort and self-indulgence, so many of us manage to have lives in which we have wealth and advantages. But that cannot change the fundamental truth that we are in bondage or the fact that in the next birth our life may be as miserable and deprived as this one was satisfying and fulfilled.

Therefore we must get away from the compulsion of birth and death, and for that we need a way of escape. There must be an actual path—a practical system of extrication from ignorance. The Master is speaking of such a way, not just theory. Various disciplines and practices comprise this way. But it is not readily at hand—at least not to our perceptions—so we must seek it out.

### **The sign of spiritual awakening**

Seeking out the way is a characteristic of spiritual awakening. Those who are awake seek, and those who still sleep do not. It is just that simple. There are many seekers, but only those are finders who seek the way out through spiritual rebirth and self-evolution that result in transcendence of birth and death. They are the seekers of whom the Master is speaking. He is not even giving a thought to those who seek lesser things.

When we look at the world around us, we see people floundering in ignorance, destroying themselves, literally, because they are not seeking God. Seeing this, we often conceive the delusive idea that we must awaken them and point them toward God. But it cannot be done. Spiritual consciousness cannot be awakened by an external force. We can awaken someone from physical unconsciousness, and even from intellectual ignorance through education. But spiritual awakening comes only from the Divine Spirit working from within the individual spirit.

Buddha usually stayed in forests and isolated areas, having nothing to do with so-called civilization. Once a disciple reproached him for not going to where people were to help alleviate their ignorance. In response, Buddha sent him to a large city to ask each person there what he would wish for if he could have anything he desired. It took him a long time, but at last he accomplished his mission and returned to Buddha. When Buddha asked him how his time had gone, the disciple replied with disgust that every person had only wanted foolish or petty things. “How many wanted enlightenment?” asked Buddha. “None,” came the answer. “Then why do you want me to force on them what they do not even want?” demanded Buddha. And the disciple got the idea.

The soul must awaken itself. In the Song of Solomon (2:7; 3:5; 8:4) we find several times the appeal not to awaken the beloved until he pleases. Another reading is not to awaken *love* until it pleases. One of the meanings is that we must not try to stir up spiritual consciousness—which is also love of God—in another person, for it must arise of itself. It is certainly right to work on stirring up our own spiritual consciousness, though, for if we were not already awake to some degree we would not desire to do so or even know that it is possible. Just as we cannot force the fruit to form and ripen on the tree, so we must not attempt such a folly with the souls of others. We do not burden children with the concerns of adulthood, and in the same way we need to leave spiritual infants undisturbed. Just as we let children prattle on in nonsense, so we should not challenge any foolishness the spiritual infants express, but just patiently listen. All we will accomplish by attempting to awaken them and get them to adopt our way of seeing things will be to arouse them to resentment, hypocrisy, or a little bit of spiritual sleepwalking until they fall back into inertia. Each of us must seek out the way himself.



## **18. Seek the way by retreating within.**

The Master previously said we are to seek *out* the way. Lest we misunderstand and think that our seeking should be external, he continues: “Seek the way by retreating within.” Carl Jung said: “Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.” We must withdraw our consciousness from the outer illusions of “things” and focus it on interior realities. The Master is not speaking of meditation now, but of simply gathering up our scattered forces and becoming self-contained.

So the first step is to gather ourselves up into ourselves. We must pull ourselves together and learn to be still. We must make ourselves coherent again. Having been spread out like a puddle on the floor, we must now come back to a semblance of shape. To do this we must gather in our forces, not expending our energies on anything external—not only through the senses, but through the mind, as well.

### **The systematic retreat**

The retreat within is likened by the yogis of India to the drawing in of its head and legs by a tortoise. The wise learn to pull all the extensions of themselves back into their source and become whole again. When this is done, and we are restored to our original integrity, then a real beginning of conscious evolution can be made. Meditation is the process to accomplish this.

This divine retreat is treated very systematically by the Indian sage, Patanjali, in his *Yoga Sutras*. There he outlines the eight steps to unitive consciousness. They are: Yama-Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi.

*Yama-Niyama* consists of that which ought to be done (*yama*), and that should not be done (*niyama*). In other words, the avoidance of vice and the cultivation of virtue. This is the fundamental step because this changes the vibration of our entire energy complex, from the gross to the most subtle bodies—which include the mind, intellect, and will. It also cuts off the production of negative karmas and begins the production of positive karmas which will expedite our eventual transcendence of all karmas.

*Asana* is the posture for meditation, which need not be the difficult Lotus Posture, but any upright position that is easy and steady. This also means the positioning of the mind in a state of relaxation and ease.

*Pranayama* is control of the life forces—not breathing exercises, as is commonly supposed, although breathing methods may be involved to some extent since it is possible to gain control of some of the subtle life forces known as prana through control of the breath, which is itself a manifestation of the prana. As the Master has said, we must “seek the way by retreating within.” That is, we need to draw our energies back within ourselves. Presently we are a field of dispersed energies. We need to draw them back in toward their centers and become a more compact field of energy. This is accomplished by—and is—pranayama.

*Pratyahara* is the interiorization of the mind, the becoming aware of interior consciousness and getting the mind acclimatized to interior states and processes.

*Dharana* is the fixing of the mind (attention) on a particular point, object, or thought.

*Dhyana* is meditation, which Patanjali defines as the continuous flow of the mind toward God, like an uninterrupted stream of oil.

The final step is *samadhi*, which is the experience of union with God. (Not its attainment, since we are always one with God.)

### **The threefold process**

Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi are the process of going within. We boldly go inside and start looking around. At the same time we are to be detached—that is, indifferent to anything that happens or that we perceive. We have to remain in a state of balance, extremely aware without being caught by any interior experiences. We are to be intensely aware without getting involved and losing ourselves in that involvement. It is a paradox, but we are to both ignore and perceive them. That is why we neither accept nor reject what arises in the sphere of our awareness. We are boldly indifferent! And through that detached attitude we affect our interior status in ways that would be impossible if we were reacting to what arises.

Here again is another example of how in esoteric practice and life we must learn to go in two directions at once. This takes courage on occasion, and that is why the Master tells us to be bold, as was Jesus when He remained silent, refusing to reply to Pilate's interrogations (John 19:9). Jumping into the water and letting ourselves sink takes a lot of nerve, and so does leaping into the mind and letting whatever comes, come. Courageous objectivity is needed.

### **Avoid classifications**

We must never fall into the pitfall of classifying our meditations into “good meditations” and “bad meditations.” All meditations are good when done correctly. Definitely, the experiences in meditation can be pleasant, unpleasant, or tedious, but that has no bearing on the quality of the meditation itself. Here, too, we must be dispassionate, accepting whatever comes. Perhaps the boring and seemingly futile and empty times of meditation take the most nerve to endure. But they are usually the most productive when viewed in retrospect.

Going boldly within is not like the stereotypic “great white hunter,” plunging into the mental jungle with gun pointed and knife between the teeth. It is just the opposite.

### **19. Seek the way by advancing boldly without.**

Since “retreating” sounds passive and carries connotations of having been routed in battle, the Master gives us the second phase of the process so we will understand that our retreat is part of a dynamic, not a passive, process: “Seek the way by advancing boldly without.” That is, having gone within and having our intuitive sense awakened, we can now move in the outer world with an illumined vision, understanding the nature of what we encounter, and be able to use it for our progress. Outside of meditation we objectify what has taken place during our retreat within.

**20. Seek it not by any one road. To each temperament there is one road which seems the most desirable. But the way is not found by devotion alone, by religious contemplation alone, by ardent progress, by self-sacrificing labor, by studious observation of life. None alone can take the disciple more than one step onward. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder. The vices of men become steps in the ladder, one by one, as they are surmounted. The virtues of man are steps indeed, necessary—not by any means to be dispensed with. Yet, though they create a fair atmosphere and a happy future, they are useless if they stand alone. The whole nature of man must be used wisely by the one who desires to enter the way. Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life. But he is only so when he grasps his whole individuality firmly, and, by the force of his awakened spiritual will, recognizes this individuality as not himself, but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use, and by means of which he purposes, as his**

growth slowly develops his intelligence, to reach to the life beyond individuality. When he knows that for this his wonderful complex separated life exists, then, indeed, and then only, he is upon the way. Seek it by plunging into the mysterious and glorious depths of your own inmost being. Seek it by testing all experience, by utilizing the senses in order to understand the growth and meaning of individuality, and the beauty and obscurity of those other divine fragments which are struggling side by side with you, and form the race to which you belong. Seek it by study of the laws of being, the laws of nature, the laws of the supernatural: and seek it by making the profound obeisance of the soul to the dim star that burns within. Steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger. Then you may know you have found the beginning of the way. And when you have found the end its light will suddenly become the infinite light.

### **The multifold path**

*Seek it not by any one road.* That is, we must take care of all angles and aspects of our being and consciousness, neglecting nothing. Some people think that meditation can be used as a gimmick for enlightenment without there being any need to provide the right conditions for its effectiveness. We can think of it like agriculture. Plowing is not everything in itself, nor is watering, or sowing, or fertilizing, or planting. They must all go together if we are to reap a harvest for our efforts. If one thing is left out then failure is inevitable. Both our interior and exterior lives must be ordered and maintained according to the laws of spiritual evolution.

### **Beware of the ego**

*To each temperament there is one road which seems the most desirable.* The adjective “desirable” shows that the Master is speaking of the egoic reaction that if it feels, tastes, or appears good, then it *is* good—which of course has nothing at all to do with whether a thing really is or is not good. The ego always mistakes the pleasant and the pleasing for the good—which never is either pleasant nor pleasing to the ego, though the spirit rejoices in it.

### **The roads**

What are the “roads” the Master has in mind? He will now enumerate them.

*But the way is not found by devotion alone, by religious contemplation alone, by ardent progress, by self-sacrificing labor, by studious observation of life. None alone can take the disciple more than one step onward. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder.* This being so, we need to make this statement a mental checklist—especially when we feel we are not progressing as we should—to help us determine if we are really doing all we need to do. It would be good to take each one in turn and look at it well.

### **Devotion**

By devotion the Master does not mean the romantic or sentimental type of devotion, but rather dedication-devotion to the search for enlightenment. It also implies devoting the entire life to the search, and not just a bit of life that can be conveniently eked out of an otherwise full agenda. The search for God must be the heart of the seeker’s entire life. In fact, it must embrace the whole of the seeker’s life so that whatever the activity engaged in, it is seen as part of the search.

Steadiness is also indicated here, for spiritual life must be continuous, not a series of startings and stoppings. Momentum is a key factor in spiritual success. Continual

practice is the means to accomplish this. Sacrifice is also implied here, but that will be spoken of shortly.

### **Religious contemplation**

Meditation is essential. But the egos of mankind have invented many processes and methods that are devoid of spiritual content to suit those to whom communion with God is distasteful and therefore undesirable. It is not to those that the Master is speaking, and to ensure this is understood, he has specified *religious* contemplation as one of the ways, not just contemplation.

This also has a twofold implication. The first is that the practice of meditation is a religious practice and therefore exclusively God-centered. Its purpose is not just *Self*-realization, but *God*-realization, for they are not the same, although God-realization includes Self-realization. The second is the truth that true meditation is a spiritual—not a mental or emotional—activity. That is, it is an action of the ever-free spirit, not of mind, intellect, or emotion (feeling).

For this reason meditation cannot involve these lesser aspects of our makeup. So all linkages to them—such as discursive prayers, visualizations, imaginations, concepts or intellectual ponderings, or self-induced (imagined) feelings of peace, love, etc.—must have no place in our meditation. God being beyond form or conceptualization—even beyond the idea that He *is*—our meditations must be beyond all such as well. As the Fathers of both East and West have said, we must enter into the Divine Darkness, into the Cloud of Unknowing, where we shall both see and know as we are seen and known.

### **Ardent progress**

By employing the term “ardent progress” the Master implies intensity, urgency, and singleness of purpose—to be afire for God. This is no shallow spiritual weekending, but a race unto the Ultimate End. God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Hebrews 12:29), and all that is not divine is dissolved by entering into His Being. As Sri Ramakrishna often said: “A salt doll once went to measure the depth of the ocean. But when it entered the ocean it was melted. Who, then, was to return to report the ocean’s depth?”

Before leaving this subject we should distinguish between the ardent progress the Master holds forth and mere rapid change which usually has no depth or lasting effect. The latter is like that of the hare in the story of the tortoise and the hare. Jesus spoke of it in the parable of the seed: “And some [seed] fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away....And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended” (Mark 4:5,6,16,18).

What is the “root” without which there can be no perseverance in spiritual life? It is the developing of interior consciousness—which is also spiritual evolution—that can only be produced through meditation. Those who rush around to lectures and seminars, devouring books and articles by the pound, babbling on and on in rhapsody about finding the truth at last and how their spiritual horizons are widening (but not deepening—that is the rub), are like firework rockets, quickly burning themselves out in a spectacular ascent only to fall back to earth to sink deeper into ignorance than they were before.

Those who quietly apply themselves in patience and perseverance like the tortoise are the ones who win through to the heavenly vision.

### **Self-sacrificing labor**

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:24-27).

Spiritual genius, like any other genius, is also one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration. Therefore much work comes before any hope of glory. Yet, labor is not enough. It must be self-sacrificing, according to the Master. Why is this? Obviously because labor in the spirit is a means of cutting off—sacrificing—our identity with the lesser, material and psychic sides of our being. Also, sacrifice is a statement of value. Nothing ventured, nothing gained; nothing spent, nothing bought. “You get what you pay for” and “There is no such thing as a free lunch” may sound mundane and even a touch vulgar, but they are nonetheless as true in the spirit as they are in the world. Therefore, correct spiritual labor both frees us from lower identity and wins for us a niche in the higher realms.

Sacrifice is a statement of value, as has been said, and the effort of sacrifice keeps reminding us of our ideals. During the persecutions of Catholics in England, one priest was kept in the attic of a jail, chained by his legs. The shackles caused terrible sores to develop on his legs, so his friends paid the jailer to take them off. When next they came to visit the priest they found the chains back on as before. “I paid him even more money to put them on me again,” he explained, “for every time I move my legs the clinking of the chains reminds me to Whom I belong.” Love does such things.

### **Studios observation of life**

Not idle observation of life, but studios observation with the intent of discovering the principles of manifestation so the way to transcend them can be eventually discovered is needed. Also, studios observation is necessary to form a correct evaluation of life and its elements. Even more, studios observation can reveal the very nature of life itself. In this case, since it is relative existence that is meant by “life,” studios observation will reveal it to be no life at all but a state of death which must be passed beyond if we would live. But first we have to see it, in the sense of full comprehension. “Have you not seen what life is?” was a question continually being put to the disciples by a contemporary spiritual teacher in India.

I once read of a woman whose husband was continually beating her. Always she made excuse for him, refusing to see his real nature. After some years, one day he lifted a club to strike—and perhaps kill—her. Suddenly, all fear vanished and she cried out: “Now I see you for what you are!” Dropping the club, her husband ran away, never to be seen again. In the same way, all that we are ignorantly wedded to will vanish in a moment once we see it truly. Only God remains when finally seen as He is.

“Studios” also implies objectivity. That is, when we do finally see through life, it will cause no pain, but rather bring peace. We shall not complain about the emptiness of worldly life, but shall abide in the real life which shall have then dawned in our consciousness.

Many things are needed to ensure that spiritual life and practice can have their full

effect on us. To get wheat, you need the seed. But possessing the seed is not sufficient. The right earth must be available. Moreover that earth must be prepared to receive the grain. Water and sunlight must also be provided. So although it is true that the corn harvest will only come out of the seeds that are sown (another necessary step), many other things are required to make the seed fruitful.

### **Swami Ramdas**

*In The Vision of God*, his spiritual autobiography, Swami Ramdas states that he was “taken” up by the Name of the Lord, that his life became completely malleable to the action of the Name. Indeed, the Name of God became the sole force in his life. No longer Ramdas, but the Name of God lived in and through him. He put all his energies upon continually repeating the Holy Name. He cared for nothing else. But was repetition of the Holy Name really *all* he did? Indeed not. He observed rigorous ascetic disciplines. He would go to places that were so freezing cold and physically miserable that he could not sleep and so would stay awake throughout the night constantly repeating the Name. He never ate meat or drank alcohol. He had nothing whatsoever to do with comfort and the life of the senses—especially sex. Much of his time was spent in solitude. So he did a great many more things than simply repeat the Name. By themselves those disciplines would have meant nothing. It was the Name alone that brought him to enlightenment. But without the ascetic labors the Name would not have had such an effect on him. Therefore it was the Name alone that transformed him, but it was his disciplines that rendered him capable of being transformed. We must never lose that perspective. Many people met Ramdas and were inspired by him to repeat the Name of God, but only those few who also observed the other disciplines that had made his illumination possible attained what he did.

### **The divine ladder**

*The vices of men become steps in the ladder, one by one, as they are surmounted.* This is important to keep in mind so that whenever we encounter a problem within our mind we need not despair or condemn ourselves, but simply apply ourselves to changing it from a pitfall into a rung on the ladder of our progress. Every behavioral and mental pattern is a kind of vortex spinning in the energy field of the mind. They are what we might call “energy mechanisms” in our aura, configurations of energy that produce mental and physical states. When spinning (polarized) one way, they draw us downward; but when repolarized (reversed) they lift us up just as surely and efficiently. Therefore every bad habit, every vice, can be transmuted into a force for our perfection. This is why great sinners can become great saints.

### **Vice And virtue**

Everything being dual, every vice is the underside of a virtue. For example, cowardice is prudence gone wrong, and hostility is courage gone wrong. So we transmute the vice into virtue. The virtue is already there, the vice only being its distortion. This is the sense in which evil does not exist, but is an aberration of good. We do not accept and indulge the negative pattern, but get busy and reform it, turning it back to its original, correct status. And that is true “repentance” in the Biblical sense.

Since the presence of vice is the presence of virtue, we need not be discouraged but take hope, for goodness is at hand. There are some motor-driven wheels that will spin according to the direction they are moved at the onset. To get them to move in the opposite way they need only be stopped and then set going again in the other direction. Electrical motors themselves will go in the opposite direction if we simply

switch the wiring of the poles. Changing our mental operations is just as simple and as precise. It may not always be easy, but it is always possible and inevitable. Patience, optimism, and right effort are all that is needed. Also, when we see a person seemingly full of vice, we are seeing a person potentially full of virtue. Great sinners can indeed make great saints.

So the Master is telling us that we need not worry about the vice as such, but instead to use the tools he has just enumerated to transform it into virtue and lift ourselves by its transmutation. For the practices he has named do change us. As we surmount the vices one by one, we rise into higher and higher reaches of consciousness.

### **The purpose of virtue**

*The virtues of man are steps indeed, necessary—not by any means to be dispensed with.* The Master is aware that some people misunderstand when they hear that they need not bewail their vices, and so they begin to accommodate and indulge them. But such things must not be allowed to continue as vices but be turned into virtues, virtues which the Master assures us cannot be laid aside for a moment, for they are absolutely necessary. Without them there is no spiritual progress, for the virtues are the tools by which we cultivate spiritual consciousness.

*Yet, though they create a fair atmosphere and a happy future, they are useless if they stand alone.* These virtues produce a positive vibration in our life and create good karma, but they are useless if they stand alone. Instead they must be applied to something—that is, they must be *used*. They are not just to be cultivated like flowers for the viewing, so people will say how nice and good we are. If they are not used as tools in the search for God, they are then as nothing. There are virtuous people who are not seeking God, and in them the virtues are spiritually meaningless.

### **Total mastery**

*The whole nature of man must be used wisely by the one who desires to enter the way.* The first step in spiritual life, then, is to gain mastery of every aspect of our nature. By “nature” the Master means that which in Sanskrit is called *prakriti*—the entire range of energies which go to make up what we call a human being. We must use these energies to get beyond them into the realms of higher evolution and ultimately into pure spirit. Just as we must go through the vices, making them into steps of virtue, so must we use all of the aspects of our nature, even though they are just vibrating energies and not our true Self. To seek the Self, we must use them.

### **Esoteric anatomy**

Isaiah says: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isaiah 2:2). This is not a political prophecy, but a reference to the esoteric anatomy of the human being. The “top of the mountains” is the awakened pineal gland at the top of the head, the whole body being “the mountain of the Lord’s house.” The “nations” that shall flow unto it are the diverse energies of the gross and subtle bodies. This is accomplished by the various esoteric practices given by Jesus to His disciples and passed on by them to succeeding generations who have been initiates of the Christian Mysteries. By means of these practices, gradually the initiate gains perfect control of all the bodies and the energies of which they are composed and orients them toward higher consciousness, establishing in them the control of the highest centers of awareness and power.

## **Mastery of energies**

We gain control of our whole nature so that we can use it in the transmutation of consciousness that alone is the search for God. Strictly speaking, the term “search for God” can be misleading. Since God is not only everywhere, but is the root essence of our very being, where would we “go” to find Him? He is not only “here,” it is He alone who makes up all that is the “here” and “there” of our experience. As one great Sufi saint wrote: “I laugh to hear of fish athirst in the water.” We do not need to “find” God, we need to *know* God.

How well I remember my childhood frustration when I could not read music. All I needed was to understand those markings on the page and—wonder of wonders!—I could make music. Even more, I remember the first time I could comprehend those markings and was able to make music. The tune was simple and eminently forgettable, but it was music, and I was on my way. This is why we speak of Gnosis as the essential in authentic Christianity. Jung was asked in an interview: “Do you believe there is a God?” “No!” was his immediate and emphatic response, “I do not *believe* there is a God, I *know* there is a God.”

Presently the energies in which we (our consciousnesses) are encased blind us to reality. But the same energies repolarized illumine the way to Gnosis—to Knowing. Though they cannot reveal the reality, they are necessary to reveal the path inward to divine vision, in which seeing and knowing are one and the same.

## **Action**

As long as we are in the realm of relativity we must act. Even the quest for enlightenment is an action. Thus we need all the energies possible for utilization in our going to God. Without esoteric practice—i.e., methodology—this is impossible. There are energy reservoirs in the body which influence (and usually control) our behavior. By means of yogic practices these energies must be put to their intended use in our evolutionary unfoldment. Even negative energies can be used by turning them back to their original positive condition. When we both can and do master them, we shall be on our way to ourselves becoming masters.

## **Individual sufficiency**

*Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life.* We have nothing to work with but ourselves, no other reality to be involved with but ourselves. There is the Supreme Reality, God, Who is also our reality, but we have lost touch with our consciousness of that truth and are immersed in the unreality of independent existence which also cuts us off from true knowledge of our individual self-reality. This being so, the first step to God is knowledge and mastery of ourselves. Then we can proceed deeper to the root-being of ourselves: God. In other words, Self-realization comes before God-realization.

There is no power for us to work with except that which we already have. We must release that power from within—not get it from God “outside.” We have already been given everything we need. We are “catholics.” That is, we are *kata holos*—we contain everything. God has given us everything we need, both within and without, so that when we do turn to God and seek for Him it will be from free choice and not because we think we have to.

One of the indications that egoic “love” is not worthy love at all is the cliché “I need you,” which is so freely used by “lovers.” It really means: “I can use you for my own satisfaction.” This may be flattering to human egos, but God wants nothing of it.



Therefore He has ensured that we can stay out in the realm of relativity, playing with the infinite variety of illusions forever, if we are so inclined. (That is the real “everlasting damnation.”) Only when real love awakens can we retrace our steps to the Divine Source.

God has made us of “independent means” so we will seek Him for Himself alone. In that search we are the way in the sense that we do not look to an external path to find God, but turn within and return within to our source in God. So we are ourselves the path we must tread back home. We are the truth, in the sense that it is our own reality we must come to know, for when we come to the root of our reality or being, we will find God, the Reality of our reality. We are the life in the same sense, for God is the Life of our life.

### **An oriental parable**

There is a story in the Far East of a man who was imprisoned in the top room of a tower. To rescue him, his wife tied a piece of silk to the back leg of a large beetle. Then she put a drop of honey on the horns of the beetle and put the beetle on the wall of the tower, aimed straight up. Wanting the honey, the beetle kept crawling forward, right up the tower. When it reached the top, the man caught hold of the silk thread. His wife then tied a cotton string onto its end. He pulled up the silk thread and got the string. She then tied a heavy cord to the string. After that she tied a small rope onto the cord, and he pulled that up. Last, she tied a heavy rope on the end of the small rope. When he had pulled that up to the top, he tied it around a stone post, climbed down it, and escaped. So it is in spiritual life. From mastery of the lesser we can proceed to mastery of the greater. First we master our physical makeup, then our mental, and then our spiritual. From conquest of our spirit we can rise to possess the Kingdom of God—the Consciousness of Infinite Spirit.

### **Pressing on**

*But he is only so when he grasps his whole individuality firmly, and, by the force of his awakened spiritual will, recognizes this individuality as not himself, but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use, and by means of which he purposes, as his growth slowly develops his intelligence, to reach to the life beyond individuality.*

“But he is only so when he grasps his whole individuality firmly.” Partial control is not sufficient—we must master the entirety of our being. This is both so there will be no imbalance in the process of transmutation and also because we are seeking to defragment ourselves and return to our original state of homogeneity. Therefore all the “passengers” must be “on board” before the journey can be begun, much less completed.

There is another aspect of this. Spiritual egotism is always a threat to the seeker, and one of its favorite tricks is to make us unduly elated over a single step in our progress, hoping to blind us to the necessity of taking many more steps before we can be “home safe.” It would like us to stop along the way and become so engrossed in self-congratulation that we think we have attained all there is to attain.

An aunt of mine was determined that her little son be a prodigy at the keyboard. She would take him from one piano instructor to another. Each in turn would suggest that he wait until he was more mature. And each would salve her ego by saying: “But your son has a beautiful ‘touch.’” She would relay this ebulliently to everyone. So it became a joke in our family that when one of us, or someone we knew, had miserably failed at trying something, to say: “But he has a beautiful ‘touch!’” Small comfort.

The Master wants us to know that to fail in one point is to fail in all. “A chain is only

as strong as its weakest link” is another way of saying it. Saint James wrote: “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). That may sound unduly severe, but it is not a judgment—it is a fact of spiritual life.

### **Individuality**

Why does he speak of individuality? Are we not to transcend that? Yes, but only when we bring it to perfect fruition. We must distinguish between the individuality of the ego and the individuality of the spirit. The egoic individuality consists of personality traits, conditionings, and karmas. The individuality of the spirit is its innate divinity.

The lesser parts of our being are the mirrors in which the divine individuality is to be reflected and radiated out to the healing of our environment as well as to us. The ego has wrested them away from the control of our spirit and turned them to reflect its false face. Erroneous philosophies therefore counsel us to smash the mirrors to become free and perfect. The correct thing is to repossess those mirrors and turn them back to their original orientation, and in them to behold our true face of spirit—which in turn will mirror back the face of God, for the individual spirit is intended to be His reflection just as our various bodies are meant to mirror us. When this is done, the process of divine transmutation—deification (theosis)—is complete.

Just as we sometimes only master a part of our individual makeup and want to believe we have mastered all, so we sometimes are satisfied with only a tenuous grasp. This is why the Master says “grasps firmly” in his exposition. Another way is to say that we must be established in that control. Often the ego steps out of the way, removes all obstacles, and lets us get just a glimpse of our destined glory with complete ease. We then mistakenly assume that we have attained that glory and vanquished the enemy. Then the ego reasserts itself and casts us down from our imagined height, hoping to thus demoralize us and cause us to give up our efforts in disgust and disillusionment. If the ego cannot destroy us through pride, then it will try to paralyze us through shame and guilt. For this reason the Master warns us to be strong in our grip.

### **Kundalini**

Where does illumination come from? Some schools say it comes from God like the strike of lightning. Some say it comes automatically from evolution, without need of thought or aspiration. But the Master speaks of this requisite insight as coming “by the force of his awakened spiritual will.” None of us doubt that some force is needed, or that it is the force of will that is the needed power, but the two words “awakened” and “spiritual” complete the picture for us. Nowadays there is a lot of talk about Kundalini, and most of its modern exponents treat the awakening of Kundalini as a kind of psychedelic fireworks display and volcanic eruption. This appeals to those who want the path to the Divine to be a circus—something it definitely is not.

Trances, shakings, visions, and “powers”—this whole array of phenomena sounds tempting to those sickened with the banality and unreality of most “Christian” churches. To have something really work is a breakthrough we all desire, and understandably so. This is why so much negative occultism is gaining vogue. It may be destructive in the long run, but at the moment it produces tangible results.

The truth is, the awakening of Kundalini is the awakening of the spiritual will. If the bodies of the aspirant have been balanced, purified, and refined as they should, then no cataclysmic displays occur. The individual will definitely be aware of the awakening and the resulting change, but it will be perfectly internalized with no external

manifestations at all. Also, it will be far more dramatic than the phenomena incorrectly considered its corollaries.

### **Spiritual will**

The will that must be awakened is that of the spirit. There are other, lesser wills that have gripped and bound us throughout the ages. As the ego is the false self, so they are false wills. But that in no way diminishes their destructive effect on us. When Jesus said: “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39), He was portraying the moment in which the lesser delusive wills are “surrendered” and dissolved at the awakening of the divine will of the divine self. We must realize that we, too, are trinities. Our higher self is “the Father.” Therefore when we read about the Father in the Gospels, it often refers to the higher self of Jesus, Who is our example. Our Father in Heaven is our higher self as well as the transcendent Father.

### **Free will?**

We all believe that we have free will—but do we? Desires and aspirations we have in abundance, as well as many compulsions, but none of them are exercises of will—rather, they are manifestations of lack of will, of our being shaped and impelled by forces other than ourselves. Conditionings galore and behavioral programmings innumerable are ours—but all from outside us, imposed upon us. Nothing of will—free or otherwise—is among them. Like railway trains, we run on the tracks others have laid down for us. We show little imagination in our life. No one ever thinks of doing anything unusual. Everybody is just going to get the job, the wife or husband, the kids, the car, and the house—all usually mediocre. Who ever thinks of finding God, much less dedicating their entire life to the search for God?

### **The awakener of will**

The will has to be awakened, and then the real labor begins for us as we begin learning to exercise the spiritual will. It must be under our complete control. This is why the aspirant must prepare himself by disciplines which strengthen the will. We can be to ourselves “the way, the truth, and the life” only when we have grasped our whole individuality “by the force of awakened spiritual will.” But that awakened will is to go further than mere control. By the power of that spiritual will the struggler then “recognizes this individuality as not himself.”

Those who think that their bodies, emotions, minds, intellects, etc., are truly themselves, through that very identification become enslaved to those things. They think they are using them when in reality they are being dragged along by them. Immoral people, for example, who spend their whole days and nights thinking of just how to exploit their senses—especially the sense of sex—think they are masters, when in reality they are slaves. Because they are living in the mirror everything is seen backwards.

### **Necessary insight**

Now we come to a statement of great import. When a man has grasped his whole individuality firmly, then he, “by the force of his awakened spiritual will, recognizes this individuality as not himself.” A little reflection reveals how this will be so. The eye cannot see itself, the hand cannot grasp itself, the foot cannot kick itself: all those actions can only be done in relation to external objects. This being so, when we grasp hold of and master the various levels of our being we will perceive them as external to ourselves and not ourselves at all. This is why the spiritual will is required to

accomplish this. For the lesser wills cannot be turned to the mastery of themselves.

Actually, to even begin the mastery of these lower entities through our spiritual will we must first be posited in our spiritual nature, which is itself spiritual *consciousness*. The only way to be a master is to not be in any way identified with what is mastered. If we listen to the whines and complaints of the not-self and sympathize with it and indulge it, we will never be its master. We must be completely objective to it.

### **The nature of individuality**

What is the individuality of the aspirant? It is “that thing which he has with pain created for his own use.” Indeed, have we not suffered to get to this point? A brief look at nature reveals the constant struggle, suffering, danger, and death in which all live. Even the bugs that bite us have bugs that bite them! How painful and exhaustive is the climb up to animal form—and infinitely more so the ascent from animal to human. And all of that has been our own doing, our own creation.

### **The great waste**

Only with great pain have we come to this level of evolution, so is it not tragic that we would waste it in doing something else besides attaining spiritual liberation? Or after all the agony of billions of lives, to then use our status only to simply run a successful business, for example? Think of taking creation cycles to get to this human body, and then to expend—and perhaps destroy—it in the pursuit of temporary material pleasure or gain. What ridiculous things we do with this fantastic instrument that we have created. It is like using FM radio for trashy music, or taking a great work of art and using it for a doorstop. More than once in recorded history barbarians have used works of art and books of fine literature for fuel.

It is spiritually insane for a human being not to utilize his life in the search for God, and his self-degradation produces great sufferings as a consequence. The subverting of our divinity can only result in infinite misery.

Once I heard an Indian saint tell of having seen an angelic being who sang over and over: “Having acquired a human body, call on God. And having filled your mind with God, then go to the world of God.” In other words, we have become humans so we can become gods. It is absurd that anyone would use the excuse: “I am not ready yet; I am not evolved enough. I have this to do and I have that to do first. Then maybe I will be ready.” The moment we enter the human form we are ready for Self—and God—realization.

### **The means of attainment**

“He...recognizes this individuality as not himself, but that thing which he has with pain created for his own use.” It is not a trap, a prison, as we have let it become, but it is an instrument for our own use. Nothing could be more fallacious than to attempt to drop or dissolve it in the hope of that way attaining enlightenment. Modern distortions of Eastern philosophies may say so, but the true masters teach just the opposite. For it is that “by means of which he purposes, as his growth slowly develops his intelligence, to reach to the life beyond individuality.”

We have only one purpose: to go beyond this relative existence. Why did we even come here, then? For that very transcendence. Does it seem absurd? It should not, for do we not enroll in school for the very purpose of one day graduating from it and leaving it behind forever? By this “creation” of our individuality which is in relativity—and which is the means of integrating us with relativity—we can go beyond relativity. It has no other purpose. To engage it in any other pursuit is to be something less than

human.

### **Evolution and intelligence**

What is evolution? There are many definitions, but the master describes its nature by describing its effect when he says that the individual's "growth slowly develops his intelligence." Please note that he says "intelligence," not "intellect." Intellect, like the mind, is only an instrument of intelligence. Intelligence is the scope of our consciousness. The greater our field of consciousness, the greater is our intelligence—something academicians miss completely through their mistaken involvement with intellect. To be intelligent is to be conscious. There are no pen and pencil tests to measure true intelligence—it is lived out in the individual's passage to the Infinite.

The Master says: "His growth slowly develops his intelligence." He knows, then, that the expansion of consciousness is a slow though steady growth. Spiritual life is neither an instant turn-on nor a jump to the Infinite. It is a gradual process in the true etymological sense of the term—that is, it goes in precise steps and stages. Moreover, it has but one purpose—to go beyond its confines into the Infinite Consciousness.

### **On the way!**

*When he knows that for this his wonderful complex separated life exists, then, indeed, and then only, he is upon the way.* The separated life is meant for the united life. We have come out from God so we could go back to God in "a more perfect union," as it says in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States.

"When he knows...he is on the way," affirms the Master. This cannot be a matter of mere belief because others have told us or because it appears reasonable and acceptable to the intellect. We must *know* that our destiny lies in God. We must have looked at ourselves and understood our nature. And we must have looked at the unself and understood its nature, too.

Many are those who say: "I have been on the Path for years," just because they belong to some metaphysical organization(s), have read metaphysical books, and can reel off the requisite cliches. This is not really being "on the way." Being on the way is the active bending of all our power to tread the way constantly, not just a little bit. Nor is it the complacent attitude: "I will just be born over and over again, and evolve from life to life." The person who is on the way is one who is actively working on his self-evolution.

### **Into the depths**

*Seek it by plunging into the mysterious and glorious depths of your own inmost being.* This is the way—the way within. Before we get to those glorious depths of the inmost consciousness, however, we have to descend through a lot that is not glorious. For this reason meditation can be exceedingly tedious—even unpleasant, uncomfortable, and upsetting—as we pass from level to level of our upper and middle layers. But this kind of psychic inventory-taking is quite necessary. The meditation process is showing us all the aspects of our being. This is because It is bringing us into mastery of them, and for that, full awareness of them is needed.

A great deal of meditation that we mistakenly think of as wasted because we are not seeing lights or visions or levitating, is this taking of inventory. We are usually out of touch with all these aspects, but if we do not pass all the soldiers in review, how will we become commander of the army? "My mind wanders so much in meditation," we say, and sometimes it is true. But we must be sure we are not mistaking this inventory-taking for mental wandering—and that we do not mistake mental wandering for

inventory-taking. We must not get caught up or distracted by those perceptions, but at the same time we must never turn away from what is being shown us, for that will prevent our correction of what we are viewing.

We are not ready for the pure awareness of God. First we must become aware of ourselves. So we seek the way by “plunging into the mysterious and glorious depths of” our “own inmost being.”

### **Testing**

*Seek it by testing all experience, by utilizing the senses in order to understand the growth and meaning of individuality,....* The senses referred to here are predominately the interior senses, astral and causal. Even when we look at something with the external eyes we can bring the inner sight into play, as well. Sometimes what we hear with the outer ear is not what we will pick up with the inner ear. And it is the interior experience that will illumine and elucidate the experience of the outer senses.

### **The beauty of others**

*...and the beauty and obscurity of those other divine fragments which are struggling side by side with you, and form the race to which you belong.* We must come to understand the evolutionary process of ourselves as well as “the beauty and obscurity of those other divine fragments which are struggling side by side with you, and form the race to which you belong.” Here the Master presents the higher side of the words: “Thy neighbor as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19, 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

We are all of us divine fragments, little pieces of the puzzle that have fallen away from the Divine unity. However ignorantly we may behave, however tiresome we can be, we are yet divine fragments. We are never anything else. The realization that we are parts of the Whole, and the resulting respect for the other parts we call “fellow-men,” is a part of the *swa adyaya*—self-study—recommended by Patanjali. Self-study entails the utilization of all these interior faculties to understand the growth and the meaning of our individuality.

By understanding ourselves we shall accordingly come to understand indeed “the beauty and obscurity of those other divine fragments.” Notice that the Master puts “beauty” before “obscurity” because the real quality of all beings is beauty, the obscuration being only a temporary condition, a mere appearance. Yet we must be aware of both, though in perspective. This is not a matter of superficial verbal affirmation; this must be an actual seeing of the beauty and the obscurity—both of ourselves and of those around us.

### **Knowing the laws**

*Seek it by study of the laws of being, the laws of nature, the laws of the supernatural.* This is because we are going to use a definite methodology, and to be effective that methodology has to conform to the laws of nature—specifically those regarding evolution. For example, in meditation we sit upright, rather than lie down, because we know the subtle currents flow upward to the higher centers of awareness in the brain when we sit upright, and disperse throughout the body when we lie down. This is also why we pay attention to diet and certain modes of behavior. We know that they affect the subtle energies involved in the evolution of consciousness.

Basically, we must slip through the net by studying the net. We must understand the way the world conditions us, so that we can become deconditioned. We must understand the weights that are put on us so we can divest ourselves of them.

## **Religion and nature**

Real religion is very sophisticated in its understanding of nature, the components of nature, and the subtle forces of nature. It is far more sophisticated than any material science can ever be—because such science is concerned exclusively with external phenomena, which are the most superficial of phenomena. We also have to know the deep things of our selves to know the inner laws of our makeup and how they work. This is why in religion that “works,” there is more emphasis placed on the invisible than on the visible, more exploration of the unseen forces than of the seen. That is because the unseen forces are much nearer to the consciousness that is “us.”

“Seek it by the study of the laws of being.” In other words, we must seek to comprehend how we come into manifestation, for once we know that we can begin our return to the Unmanifest.

## **Go within**

*...and seek it by making the profound obeisance of the soul to the dim star that burns within.* “Seek it by the study of the laws of...the supernatural,” counsels the Master, because the roots of all lesser laws are there in the spirit. Consequently we must come to know the laws of the spirit and scrupulously follow them. The ways of spirit are the true Law of God, and must be adhered to absolutely in all conditions and at all times. There is nothing free-form here. It is precise and it is certainly absolute. There are neither exceptions nor modifications. This is why discipline and perfect observance of spiritual laws are the only real way to freedom.

## **The path of the masters**

*Steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger. Then you may know you have found the beginning of the way.* “Seek it by making the profound obeisance of the soul to the dim star that burns within.” The whole of the soul must be offered there, must bow before that dim light within. It is very dim in the beginning—sometimes we cannot even see it at first. But “steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger.” This is real worship. Worship is not making offerings of “things” but of consciousness—our selves. When we sit and ignore all else but that, and we let that light alone lead or draw us to itself—that is the ultimate worship.

As the Master says, that light, that inner star, may at first be very dim, but perseverance reveals its blazing glory, but as we watch and worship interiorly we shall come to realize that it is the Living Presence of God. Therefore meditation should be approached with reverence, for by means of it we are placing ourselves in the presence of God.

## **A beloved cliché**

*And when you have found the end its light will suddenly become the infinite light.* Spiritual leaders in India are constantly being plied with a “spiritual” cliché that after a while comes to be most annoying. It goes like this: “We have been doing so many things for so many years trying to obtain peace of mind. We have visited so many great souls (*mahatmas*) and listened to them. Yet we do not obtain peace of mind. Why is that?” Those who ask this actually have not really been doing very much, and they have not been steady in their “doing” at all. But because they are so unaware of their own minds they ask this over and over. Of course the asking is really excuse-making for their lack of spiritual progress. It also implies that “the mahatmas” are at fault for their non-attainment.

The first time this was tossed out at me I batted the ball back by answering: “You are only looking at one part of it: what you should be doing to obtain peace of mind. Now let’s look at what you ought to *quit doing* in your life, so that you can get peace of mind.” Hey, presto! The questioning ceased instantly.

### **Arise and go!**

There is no use sitting in the hog wallow complaining: “I have been spraying perfume all day long, so why does it still smell bad?” We have to get up and move out of the filth. We must learn what to cut out of our life as well as what to add to our life.

There is a story in India about some people who needed to attend a wedding quite a distance from their home. In those days there were few roads, so rivers were used for travel. Since the journey would be long and the weather was hot, they decided to start out after dark and row all night so they would reach their destination before noon the next day. Getting into the boat they rowed all night, taking turns at the oars. When the sun rose they found to their chagrin that they had not moved one foot. Why? Because they had forgotten to pull in the boat’s anchor. In the same way no spiritual efforts will avail if we are still tied to material consciousness by our acts and will.

### **21. Look for the flower to bloom in the silence that follows the storm: not till then.**

**It shall grow, it will shoot up, it will make branches and leaves and form buds, while the storm continues, while the battle lasts. But not till the whole personality of the man is dissolved and melted—not until it is held by the divine fragment which has created it, as a mere subject for grave experiment and experience—not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its higher self, can the bloom open. Then will come a calm such as comes in a tropical country after the heavy rain, when Nature works so swiftly that one may see her action. Such a calm will come to the harassed spirit. And in the deep silence the mysterious event will occur which will prove that the way has been found. Call it by what name you will, it is a voice that speaks where there is none to speak—it is a messenger that comes, a messenger without form or substance; or it is the flower of the soul that has opened. It cannot be described by any metaphor. But it can be felt after, looked for, and desired, even amid the raging of the storm. The silence may last a moment of time or it may last a thousand years. But it will end. Yet you will carry its strength with you. Again and again the battle must be fought and won. It is only for an interval that Nature can be still.**

### **Only the Complete is complete**

*Look for the flower to bloom in the silence that follows the storm: not till then.* The result does not come while we are still working at something, but only when the work is completed. In India the yogis frequently say: “Making, making, made!” Buddhists recite a sutra that can colloquially be rendered as: “Going, going, gone!” expressing the same idea. Even a statue is not completed until the last stroke is done and the chisel and mallet are laid aside. Only when the storm is over, duality has vanished, all coming and going has ceased, and all change has been transcended, will the flower bloom in the silence.

### **We are the only doer**

If we pick up a cat by the tail, it is going to start scratching and biting us. Praying to



God, asking that the cat stop, will do no good, nor will all the affirmative philosophy in the world help us. We have to let go of the cat's tail. So as long as we have the cat by the tail—as long as we are still holding on to our ego, to the material side of our existence—it is going to continue clawing us. That is its very nature, so why would we expect anything else?

My paternal grandfather was a typical Victorian father, and was used to his second eldest daughter, Elizabeth, pouring his tea for him. Once when she was not there, he took the teapot himself and began to pour from it. When the cup was nearly full, he snapped: "There, Liz!" The tea went right on flowing up to the top of the cup. Again he said: "There, Liz!" And, of course, it kept going on. "There, Liz!" he repeated. Then, as the cup overflowed, he shouted: "There, Liz, drat you!" Everyone else at the table began laughing, and he realized that he himself was doing the pouring. In the same way, it is no use to ask God or anyone else to "stop it." We are doing it all ourselves. The stopping is completely up to us.

Will nothing worthwhile happen until the storm is over? Much indeed will happen during—and because of—the storm. The Master says:

*It shall grow, it will shoot up, it will make branches and leaves and form buds, while the storm continues, while the battle lasts.* We are in no way wasting our time as we are engaging in the interior warfare. The lotus of enlightenment will grow, shoot up, and produce branches, leaves, and buds. And when the war is over the lotus will bloom.

### **Divine dissolution**

*But not till the whole personality of the man is dissolved and melted—not until it is held by the divine fragment which has created it, as a mere subject for grave experiment and experience—not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its higher self, can the bloom open.*

The "divine fragment" is us—our immortal spirit. We are a spark of light in the great ocean of light. But we put on the costume of the various bodies and that which we call "personality" in order to enter into relative existence and thereby develop the capacity to share in God's infinite consciousness. But we have let our personality and its powers run amok like a chariot dragged along by runaway horses. That which was meant to be an instrument which we could use through the force of an illumined will has instead taken over and created utter chaos in us who should be the masters rather than the mastered.

As the Master says, we have created all the facets of our personality—no one else. In time, though, all this that we have gathered around us must be melted and dissolved, returned to the primal light from whence it came. Until that is done, we cannot possibly attain any significant degree of spiritual enlightenment: enlightenment and freedom being the same thing. As long as the shackles are on us, it is silly for us to say that we are free.

### **Why?**

Why did we create this personality and its vehicles? "For grave experiment and experience." This matter of evolution is no superficial game, it is grave—i.e., serious—indeed. For it is a matter of life and death in the highest and most profound sense. Our purpose was to go out from God finite, and to return to God infinite, but we have become locked into this relative identity instead of using it as a costume with the intention: "I am manifesting through this form to realize its full potential so that I can transcend it and go on to a higher form, eventually transcending the highest form to unite my consciousness with that of God." Not only have we become confined to our

personality-costume, through identity with it we have created karma which keeps drawing us back into incarnation again and again.

We should have manifested each particular form (evolutionary level) only once and then passed upward to the next higher form, having realized the full potential of the discarded form. We consider children stupid if they have to repeat the same grade over and over again, but we think that it is perfectly all right for us to have hundreds of human births. Often we hear someone tell another: "You are an old soul." That is no flattery when we understand what it implies. A real compliment would be to say to a person practicing spiritual discipline: "You are a very new soul."

By our own efforts we have to dissolve and melt the personality-vehicle so that we can go on higher. "Not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its higher Self, can the bloom open." In other words, the spirit must dominate, must rule from the first to the last. If the higher Self does not do that, then there is no use to look for the bloom. We should not wonder at our lack of attainment. We need to look carefully within and see who we have occupying the throne of our inmost heart, for only one can sit there at a time. We have to decide who will sit there—the ego or the true Self. They cannot share the dominion, for they are mutually exclusive. Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters—duality (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). Our single master must be our higher Self. Then the sacred lotus of spirit will bloom.

### **All in good time**

The Master is telling us to keep at it, to keep on working, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but to press onward, ever onward. And above all, he is telling us not to go looking for something that it is not even the time to attain.

"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he [Jesus] was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. And when even was come, he went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away" (Mark 11:12-14, 19-21).

Here we are told that Jesus "cursed" the barren fig tree, and then that it was not the season for figs! Why did He do such a thing? We must know the ways of fig trees to understand. Unlike other fruit-bearing trees, figs bear fruit first and leaves next. Therefore when a fig tree has leaves it is a sign that it also has figs. Since it was not the season for figs, there should have been no leaves on the tree. This incident is symbolic, portraying the eventual fate of a person that has not borne the fruit of spiritual development, yet has taken upon himself all the external trappings of spirituality—in other words, a pharisaical type of life. So the Master is saying to not go looking out of season for the bloom of the spirit.

### **After the storm**

*Then will come a calm such as comes in a tropical country after the heavy rain, when Nature works so swiftly that one may see her action.* The Master is referring to the Asian monsoons after which vegetation grows so rapidly that it seems to be growing before the eyes of the observer.

There is another reason why the monsoon is used as a symbol. Unlike our rainy seasons in the West, in which the sky is continually overcast, in the Orient during monsoon season the sky is usually completely clear. This is because the monsoons

blow in rapidly. (I learned this at the cost of a few instant soakings when I was in Calcutta.) You can go out of the house and find the sky as blue and clear as on any dry summer day. As you proceed along the street, everything is just fine, and then in a moment torrential rains pour down on you, soaking you in a matter of seconds. If you can, you take refuge under some type of shelter and wait. Just as suddenly the rains stop, the sun shines, and the sky is as empty of clouds as before. The clouds have been either totally emptied of rain or have been blown onward. The clouds represent the forces of karma which must be either utterly exhausted or somehow transcended. Also, when the rain is over it is absolutely over, and the resulting calm is also absolute. This is because the relative—therefore delusive—personality is dissolved like the clouds, never to return.

### **Blessed peace**

*Such a calm will come to the harassed spirit. And in the deep silence the mysterious event will occur which will prove that the way has been found.* The spirit is indeed harassed, having been trapped in the whirling energies of ever-changing bodies and minds through aeons, each body-mind a wolf that seized and attempted to devour the spirit, to arrogate its immortal nature and life unto itself whose essential nature was mortality and death.

“And in the deep silence the mysterious event will occur which will prove that the way has been found.” The mysterious event is as ineffable as That Which it reveals, so I will make no attempt to describe or define it. But when it happens it will be known for what it is.

### **The voiceless voice**

*Call it by what name you will, it is a voice that speaks where there is none to speak—...* The Master is not going to describe it, because if it was describable it would be something in the realm of relativity and therefore within the reach of language. This also indicates to us that we are going toward a condition in which there is no one to speak—not just a state of momentary quiet. A crowd can be quieted, but it can erupt into violence a moment later. What we must do is empty ourselves so that there is no one there to “speak.” This is the only condition that will produce real calm and peace.

It has already been mentioned that Sri Ramakrishna often spoke of the salt doll that went to measure the ocean, but when the salt doll got in the ocean it melted and there was no one to come back to tell how deep the ocean was. In other words, the egoistic idea “I will go measure, and then come back and tell others” is dissolved.

The Buddhist Master Ho Tai taught the same thing in a more objective way. When asked what enlightenment was, he put down the large sack he was carrying. When asked what the objectification of enlightenment was, he picked it back up and walked on. There was nothing to be said. In silence was the message.

“And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice”(I Kings 19:11,12). An alternate reading for “a still small voice” is “a sound of gentle stillness.”

The voice does not just speak in the Silence, it *is* the Silence. And it only speaks when there is none other to speak.

### **The messenger**

*...it is a messenger that comes, a messenger without form or substance; or it is the flower of the soul that has opened. It cannot be described by any metaphor. But it can be felt after, looked for, and desired, even amid the raging of the storm.* By “feeling” the Master means intuiting, not emoting. That is, we can intuit it and feel that it is real, feel that its attainment is possible. We can know that it is there. We may not know what is there, but we can know that it is there, as a blind person can sense the presence of another. So we can have this dim feeling of “something,” if nothing more.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

We can look for and desire it—literally yearn for it—even while the storm is raging. For it is one of the things that will help us get over the storm.

*The silence may last a moment of time or it may last a thousand years. But it will end.* Remember we said that Ho Tai then picked up his sack and went away. That is, the “moment” will not be the end, rather it will be the beginning of an entirely new mode of consciousness—and therefore of life.

The eternal moment comes to us according to the distinctive character of the tides of our inner life. If we are waiting and ready for that moment, then we will cycle up to a higher mode of being. But if we are too busy looking at the scenery or lazing around, taking it easy for the moment, we will miss it. Worse, we will not even know that it came.

One of the worst delusions we can have about spiritual life is that we have unlimited time to “get on board.” It is indeed true that we have eternity to dawdle in, but it is not true that the door is always open. For some the door opens for quite a long time, and for others it opens for a short time and then closes. But close it eventually does if we do not pass through it. And for most people the door remains closed until a future birth.

How many times I have seen people wasting their time, assuring themselves that in a few months or years they will straighten up and seriously begin their search. In each case they have lost their opportunity for this lifetime. And since we reap what we sow, in a future life when they do begin to seek, the door will be denied them for some time—perhaps even for that life, as well.

### **A warning**

Although it does not quite fit in here, I want to explain a principle of spiritual life that everyone should know: Whatever it might be that causes us to turn away from spiritual life in order to possess or retain it, that very thing will be taken from us; and we will then be without it and without spiritual life as well. We shall drift in the sky of life like a broken cloud for the rest of our incarnation, and perhaps for a few future ones. Over and over I have seen people give up their spiritual life for the sake of getting or keeping some thing, person, or relationship that demanded their full commitment. In every case they lost what they were grasping for, and never turned back to the Way of Life.

Let the wise be warned: we must never sacrifice our spiritual life for anything. Not only will it be a foolish choice, we will either never gain it or we will lose it altogether. The moment of decision does not last forever. It comes and goes from life to life.

### **The divine spiral**

*Yet you will carry its strength with you.* For those who do grasp the moment, the Master gives the assurance that although it may pass, “yet you will carry its strength

with you.” All along the way, as we spiral upward, we reach plateaus from which we usually do not slip back.

### **Many times we fight the same battle**

*Again and again the battle must be fought and won.* Many times we hear people complain that they keep struggling with the same problems over and over again. What they do not realize is that each time they are struggling with them on a different level, for the roots of ignorance strike deep, passing through many layers of our being.

*It is only for an interval that Nature can be still.* By Nature is meant the whole range of existence, up to the supreme worlds. And it is in those moments of true silence that the most progress can be made, progress that will be of permanent effect. Eventually we will be able to pass into the perfect silence forever, but until then we must be content with—and ready for—those rare moments when the tides of duality are in abeyance. To reach those moments we must enter into the core of our being, for there alone the Silence is found.

### **Only the beginning**

Have we now finished? Not at all! The Master now assures us that:

**These written above are the first of the rules which are written on the walls of the Hall of Learning. Those that ask shall have. Those that desire to read shall read. Those who desire to learn shall learn. Peace be with you.**

## **Part Two**

**Out of the silence that is peace a resonant voice shall arise. And this voice will say, It is not well; thou hast reaped, now thou must sow. And knowing this voice to be the silence itself thou wilt obey.**

**Thou who art now a disciple, able to stand, able to hear, able to see, able to speak, who hast conquered desire and attained to self-knowledge, who hast seen thy soul in its bloom and recognized it, and hear the voice of the silence, go thou to the Hall of Learning and read what is written there for thee.**

### **Silence that is peace**

*Out of the silence that is peace....* It is not the mere silence of no sound, just as keeping silence does not mean to simply not speak. There are those who are noisier when they “keep silence” than when they do not. How well do I remember what a joke some people’s “day of silence” would be. I could know it was their day of silence because they banged everything they picked up, stomped across the floor when they walked, and slammed every door they closed. If they did a simple thing like the dishes it sounded like the Charge of the Light Brigade. It was obvious they just could not endure silence. And instead of staying home and being quiet, they would go around people with a piece of paper pinned on them saying: “This is my day of silence.” Then they would gesture wildly and make odd noises rather than speak—wasting more energy than if they had shouted and jumped around. One woman would go into a temper spell if her gyrations and huffings were not understood. Therefore one contemporary spiritual leader of India has said: “Avoid at all costs those who while pretending to keep silence write notes and make gestures.” If we just do not want to speak that is one thing; but if we want to keep silence, that is another.

So the silence that is peace is something more than just the absence of sound. The

great Staretz Adrian of Novo-Divyevo said that from childhood he perceived real spiritual atmosphere and presence as a pervading silence in the midst of all movement and sound. He said that he especially found it in church services; that although singing and movement were going on he experienced an utter stillness which he intuitively knew was the essence of spiritual life—the stillness could be found in the heart of movement, not in the absence of movement.

His words bring to mind the statement of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita it is said that the man of wisdom perceives the action that is in inaction and the inaction that is in action—the movement that is in stillness and the stillness that is in movement. “He who sees the inaction that is in action, and the action that is in inaction, is wise indeed. Even when he is engaged in action he remains poised in the tranquility of the Atman” (Bhagavad Gita 4:18). That is why in the temples of India when it is time for worship all of a sudden everything begins to bang and clang—gongs are beaten, conch shells are sounded, and bells are rung. Usually many people are singing loudly. And yet, if you examine your inner mind you will discover that in that moment you have entered into perfect silence. This is a secret that only the East—the right brain—comprehends. To attain silence we need not stop sound, rather we need to move into That which is at the center of sound.

Saint Silouan of Athos wrote that people have lived in deserts and caves, supposedly alone, and yet have had the whole world with them in their minds; but Saint John of Kronstadt, who was never physically alone except for a hour or two a day, was always alone—that when he was in the midst of thousands of people pressing around him, wanting to touch him and speak to him, it was evident that he was absolutely alone, that nothing of the pandemonium around him was touching his mind. He was alone with God even then.

I have seen people mobbing Mother Anandamayi as though they were going to tear her into little pieces. Some came armed with scissors to cut off her hair and pieces of her clothes to keep as relics. Sometimes a regiment of police had to be called out to safeguard her. Yet she was as tranquil as if there was no one there. Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh was the same. Lesser saints, though greatly developed, did not have that ability. But those who were out of the game, having won home, did not change, whatever the external circumstance.

Peace in the form of unmoving consciousness is the true Silence. It is out of vogue now, but back in the 'twenties through the 'fifties there was a lot of talk about “Entering The Silence.” Many metaphysical books had a chapter on “How To Enter The Silence.” But the instruction would be nothing more than to sit like a lump and try to not think. This is a futile attempt since we are a miniature universe—wherever we are, everything is going on. Everything. Nothing can be escaped because we are a part of it through our bodies which connect us to relative existence. But if we shift our awareness into that eternal part of ourselves which is as transcendent as is God Himself, then the game is over. This is what the Master is speaking of, and of which Jesus spoke when He told His disciples: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”

### **The voice in the silence**

*...a resonant voice shall arise.* The prophet Elijah had this experience: “And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am

left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice” (I Kings 19:9-12).

Wind, earthquake, and fire—but God was not in them. Then there was silence, yet in the silence there was a voice. “A still small voice” means that silent (still) subtle (small) impulse which is the very root of “word” and therefore Word itself. The New King James Version gives it as “a delicate whispering voice.” The Greek Septuagint has “the voice of a gentle breeze,” evidently keeping in mind that the Holy Spirit is the Breath of God and often manifests as wind. The Slavonic text renders it “the movement of a silent light.” This, too, is appropriate, for the Holy Spirit is also Light. Actually, it cannot be at all expressed in human terms, for it is far beyond the senses and ordinary experience. But however it might be described, it is the voice of God coming through the pure spirit that is our true essence.

### **Reprimand of the spirit**

*And this voice will say, It is not well; thou hast reaped, now thou must sow.* Being oriented to egoic gratification, even in spiritual life we have the idea that we need only enjoy our attainments, revel in them, and congratulate ourselves on having at last “made it.” But the Voice of Truth tells us that such “is not well.” Rather: “Thou hast reaped, now thou must sow.” This is very interesting, for we usually think that reaping is the end of it all. We reason that we are in the world to reap our karmas, and when that is done, all has been done—rebirth will be ended, all bonds dissolved. But the inmost voice says otherwise. There is more to be done.

*And knowing this voice to be the silence itself thou wilt obey.* We will not wonder whether the voice is right—in that state we will know it is Truth itself, the truth of our own Self, and the Self of our Self that speaks. And we will obey. This is the path of the disciple. It is not rhapsodic talk about “masters” that is the path. Rather, discipline is the path, but discipline that is an act of our illumined will, not a passive acquiescence to an outside influence.

### **A disciple**

*Thou who art now a disciple, able to stand, able to hear, able to see, able to speak, who hast conquered desire and attained to self-knowledge, who hast seen thy soul in its bloom and recognized, and heard the voice of the silence, go thou to the Hall of Learning and read what is written there for thee.* Those who have truly attained to any degree of spiritual progress do not want to be teachers, but aspire to be perfect learners. To help us, then, the Master is going to outline just what the traits of worthy disciples are.

“Able to stand.” That is, able to be established in one spot, unshaken in spiritual awareness, able to endure, possessing firmness and stability on all levels, which also implies *definition* on all levels.

“Able to hear.” In other words, possessing the ear of the spirit.

“Able to see” with the single “eye” of enlightenment. “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matthew 6:22).

All these descriptive statements imply something, namely that before this time we are not able to stand, to hear, and to see. Of course we could do so on the lower level of existence. Indeed we can entrench ourselves in ignorance very easily. We can hear all

kinds of foolishness, see all kinds of foolishness, and speak all kinds of foolishness. But it can be said of us: “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). All that we do out of ignorance is but a mockery of the real powers we should—and already innately do—have.

“Able to speak,” possessing the Power of Word. This is perhaps the most important of all, for it is listed last as the capstone, the finishing touch. Perhaps the most commonly heard complaint from those dwelling in the darkness of their egos is that of not having their prayers answered—that God does not hear their prayers. Of course they are right. God does *not* hear their prayers—because God is a spirit, and they do not “pray with the spirit” (I Corinthians 14:15). Only the disciple has opened the inner mouth with which effective prayer or affirmation can be made. The non-disciple may speak much, but on the inner planes he is a mute.

“Who has conquered desire and attained to self-knowledge.” Notice the cause and effect implied here. Desire is an impediment to Self-knowledge. How can that be? Because desire is based on—and affirms—the delusion that external objects can produce the internal experience of happiness, peace, or fulfillment. As long as desire is allowed to motivate our behavior we are willfully blinding ourself to the truth that everything is within us, that we can have nothing else, and that spiritually we are sufficient unto ourselves.

### **Keep pressing on**

Once we attain Self-knowledge, is it the end as most suppose? No. Beyond Self-knowledge is God-knowledge, beyond Self-realization is God-realization—although in a mysterious way the two are one. Once we have established our consciousness in the little deity of our Self, then we have to learn to expand into the infinite Deity—Whom the German philosophers have called the Over-Soul and whom the sages of India have named Parabrahman, Paramatman, and Parameshwara.

You, O disciple, are one who has “attained to Self-knowledge, who hast seen thy soul in its bloom and recognized it, and heard the voice of the silence.” This is no small thing—to have perceived the evolution of the spirit and by means of that perception to have heard the Word spoken in the depths of the soul. Yet it is in no way the end. Having attained to a high degree of knowledge you are now capable of learning much, much more. Therefore: “Go thou to the Hall of Learning and read what is written there for thee.” Written into the very fabric of the creation are those principles or archetypal patterns that we think of as “laws.” Many of them are related to spiritual life—that is, spiritual evolution. So if we would truly ascend beyond the bonds of all limitations of consciousness we will carefully ascertain those laws and follow them scrupulously.

It is so easy to be fooled by the ego and our inexperience into thinking that we have attained everything when we have only just begun. I once read an autobiographical sketch of a woman who claimed that when she began spiritual life she attained cosmic consciousness in two weeks and then quickly went on to higher things. Not likely! Once in India I heard a man speaking to a friend of mine about getting an interview with Sri Anandamayi Ma. “I don’t need any advice on spiritual life from her,” he confided, “because I already have attained self-realization. I’m not concerned about that.” Triguna was visibly amazed. “Well, then, what do you want to talk to Mother about?” “I want to ask Her if there is anything beyond perfection that I should be looking for.” Hearing this exchange, I could not help but remember a letter written to Swami Bhaktivedanta, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement. A man wrote that he had joined some of Swamiji’s disciples in singing the Hare Krishna mantra one



afternoon in Central Park. He had felt very uplifted and inwardly elated by doing so, and he wanted to know if that meant he had become enlightened. Bhaktivedanta replied: “When you eat a big meal do you need to ask someone if you are full? Keep on chanting Hare Krishna.” Simple profound truth.

### **1. Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior.**

In the first section we were exhorted to be completely active—“kill out ambition,... kill out desire of life,...kill out desire of comfort,...work as those who work, work,... seek,...desire,...look....” So much to do! In light of that we would naturally assume that we are going to be told more of the same. But not so. This time we must step aside. Yet not because it is going to be a time of peace, for the entire instruction is: “Stand aside in the coming battle.”

There is a battle coming, and we should step aside? It seems confusing, but there is an incident in the *Mahabharata* that may help us. After years of attempts at peace between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, it was seen that war was inevitable because the Kauravas wanted it. Sides were being drawn up. Arjuna the great yogi was going to be the leader of the Pandava side and the evil Duryodhana would head the Kauravas. All the rulers of India had gathered for the negotiations, so Arjuna and Duryodhana were going to each one and asking which side they would fight on. Most said that they would fight on the side of the Kauravas. (The Kauravas outnumbered the Pandavas more than twenty to one when the battle finally took place.) Last of all they went to Krishna, Whose army was one of the largest in India. Duryodhana hated Krishna, Whom he had several times tried to kill. So he was sure that Krishna would side with the Pandavas. Arjuna was of the same opinion. But when they put the question, to the astonishment of both Krishna said: “There is my army and there is me. One of you can have my army, and the other can have me—but I will not fight.” Duryodhana was chagrined—surely Arjuna would choose the army and he would be left with Krishna whom he loathed and hoped to kill. Arjuna did not hesitate. “Duryodhana can have your army,” he said, “but You must drive my chariot, even though You do not fight.” And so it was agreed. Krishna did not fight, but drove the chariot of Arjuna...and the Pandavas won, for: “Where Lord Krishna is, and Arjuna, great among archers, there, I know, is goodness and peace, and triumph and glory” (Bhagavad Gita 18:78). That is, where there is the Supreme Reality and one who heeds Its wisdom, there is victory assured.

### **A matter of identity**

So the Master is not telling us to be negatively passive, but rather to identify with pure spirit, the eternal witness of all that takes place in relativity. Creation and its “story” is the dance of the Holy Spirit Mother before the Only-begotten Father-Son. When we identify with the dance it sweeps us along in its tides, but when we identify with the unmoving Consciousness of God we are the masters, the lords, of the dance.

“Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior.” Amazing! We are to fight and not be the warrior. Yet it is not contradictory if we realize that it is the Eternal that does all things within time, that there is only one Doer, and that is God—including the god within (and which is) us. It is a matter of identity. Act, but do not act. Be out of the picture while in the picture. This is no easy matter. Nor is it just talk. Mark Twain wrote about an encounter with a mental healer who went on quite volubly about how there is no pain, only pausing to yell “Ouch!” when she stuck her finger with a pin. After having “worked” on him for healing she

gave him a bill for a whopping sum of money. He looked at the bill, then looked at her and asked: “Nothing exists but Mind?” And she answered: “Nothing!” “So I wrote her an imaginary check,” he says, “and now she is suing me for substantial dollars.” No theory here—only Gnosis will do the needful.

We must understand that everything we are experiencing is simply the movement around us of the divine light, that it is teaching us, showing us the truth—that it is an illusion, but *not* a lie—that is, it is a “training film” of Wisdom. After all, the word “gate” is not a gate, but we do not refuse to use it, for it gives us the awareness of the actual gate. In the same way the Divine Illusion leads us to the Divine Reality.

### **In the illusion**

Our problem is that we have fallen into the Illusion and identified with it fully, forgetting the truth of our nature as consciousness—as spirit. Recently we have been hearing about “virtual reality” in which we can electronically experience space flight, etc. But that is what we have already been doing through countless incarnations. And we have forgotten the truth about ourselves and come to believe only in the truth of our perceptions, which are illusions. We struggle with them and suffer as a consequence. For we do not learn from them, we do not get the message. And we never will until we pull back, stand aside, and observe.

This is really essential, and this is very, very, *very* hard to do, because naturally we want to meddle with the movie and control it, not realizing that it is only going to unfold as it is going to unfold—that we are just pinpoints in a vast sea of creative power which is meant to teach us and develop in us the capacity for ever-increasing modes of consciousness. And it is only through perfection of consciousness that we can truly deal with the world around—and within—us. We must stop thinking that the mirror image is our real face. We should use the mirror, but we must not lose sight of the fact that it is a mirror and not “the thing itself.” We must come to identify with spirit and use the fundamental instrument of consciousness: the creative will.

The creation dances—we do not dance. But it appears that we do. We must not succumb to that appearance. Once when seeing a temple flag waving in the wind, a disciple asked his master: “Which is moving, the flag or the wind?” The Master replied: “The mind is moving.” We “fight” through the application of our will, but it is the creation that responds and is the real “warrior.”

So we do fight...but we are not the fighter. It is all by “remote control.” We must learn to “do” things as God does them if we would truly come to sit within His throne. (“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” Revelation 3:21).

### **Muppet wisdom**

The first time we went to the Hall of Learning (in Part One) the Master let us think we were the doer, because he understood that we could not yet comprehend the truth of this, and if we did we would most likely dislike it. We would no doubt be like the famous muppet, Fozzie. He looked down and called out in alarm. When Kermit came to see what was the trouble, Fozzie grabbed him and yelled: “Don’t look down!” Then he said in a loud whisper: “There is somebody underneath me.” And he looked down and shouted, “No, don’t look! There’s somebody underneath you, too!” “Of course. We’re Muppets and those people are working us,” Kermit explained. Fozzie put his hands on his head and protested: “I just can’t relate to that concept!” We would have reacted the same way.

Our minds have to be evolved enough to handle the higher metaphysical facts.

Otherwise we misunderstand or reject them. Some people simply shatter when confronted with the truth. And then they run. Even Vivekananda, when he first came to Sri Ramakrishna, used to mock the idea that all was God. But in time he learned—and spent the rest of his life teaching multitudes that all is God. We, too, must ripen, and the Master knew that. First he urged us to act, and now he tells us to stand aside, just as our parents send us to school in hope that one day we will graduate and quit going to school. As we move from level to level in our growth there will be corresponding changes in our outlook and approach to life in all its aspects. It is like the Buddhist Master that asked a philosophical question of a disciple. When the disciple answered, the Master said: “Yes, that is right.” The next day he asked the same question, and upon receiving the same answer responded: “No, that is wrong.” “But yesterday you said my answer was right,” the disciple protested. “Yesterday it was right; today it is wrong,” the Master told him. Was he being capricious? No. In the meantime the disciple had grown enough to hold a more accurate view. And chances are the “right” answer switched back and forth several times before he attained that state in which there are no answers at all, for there are no more questions or even the possibility of questions.

It is time to stop Doing and start Being.

## **2. Look for the warrior and let him fight in thee.**

Perhaps before beginning to comment on the verse as a whole it would be good to look at what the Master means by “him.” Although the Master uses the singular term “him” in this section, two entities are spoken of, the singular form being used for two reasons: 1) you must first find one before finding the other, and 2) they are one in essence.

The mystery—at least to the limited human mind—of diversity in unity and unity in diversity, especially in relation to the duality/unity of God and individual spirits, has exercised the minds of higher philosophers of all ages and traditions. The wise have concluded that the “how” of this is simply beyond human comprehension, but they are unanimous in stating that this truth can be directly perceived through development of the consciousness within each one of us. In other words, the Reality that is the real nature of consciousness, finite and infinite, can be known through mystical experience.

It is imperative, then, that we keep in mind throughout the Master’s exposition that both God and man are being spoken of. Knowledge of God is impossible without the prerequisite of Self-knowledge. That is, the individual must come to know himself as finite eternal pure consciousness (spirit), drawing its existence from, and ever within, the infinite eternal pure consciousness that is God. Although the Master’s immediate message is the necessity for Self-realization, he is assuming that God-realization will be its natural corollary.

### **Nothing is automatic**

“Look for the warrior and let him fight in thee.” The first point made by this simple statement is that the coming activity in the spirit is not going to be automatic. One of the illusions cherished by us in our egoic laziness is the idea that the day will come when we will spontaneously do the right things and accomplish what we should. We like this idea of spontaneity because it implies the lack of any effort on our part whatsoever. In other words, we do not want to row up the river, we want to drift down on the current. But this is an impossibility—especially for persons on the human rung of the evolutionary ladder.

To escape from the bondage of ignorance which prevails in this world, effort is

needed until we draw our last breath. The strength for the effort is indeed drawn from the reservoir of God's power, but the very drawing itself can be a labor for us. Every step on the path to reunion with God must of necessity be a conscious act of will.

### **Children of lies**

the devil, who is the father of lies (John 8:44) and a slanderous accuser (Revelation 12:10), many of those who observe us walking this path begin screaming about brainwashing, mind control, mental dominance, undue influence, loss of freedom of thought and will—in other words, all the “tools of the trade” of those who tread the path upon which *they themselves*—not us—are embarked. For it is the world that brainwashes us into acceptance of its illusions, that controls our minds in an endeavor to keep us from awakening and escaping its bondage, that demands that our minds be occupied continually with the struggle for survival and the distractions of earthly life, that warps our mind and makes it a complete slave to externality, and that renders us incapable of thinking or willing independently or contrary to the currents of earthly life. And those who are the slaves of this world and who to a greater or lesser degree consciously serve their Satanic master, work the same destruction upon their fellow human beings. Therefore when they see anyone attempting to escape from their nets of deception they begin accusing them of the very things which they are perpetrating on humanity. They express disgust, even horror and disbelief at every practice which works to free us from their domination, and try to convince others that it is we who are working their dark works.

However much the opposition may bellow, the disciple must—and does—follow the path of conscious choice. All along the way, the lorelei forces of ignorance call out to entice us with promises of ease, peace, and rest—if only we will step from the path and begin to drift with them. How enticing it is to the weary warrior at times! Our egos may clothe the desire for surrender in high-sounding terms of philosophy, but cowardly surrender it still remains.

### **A serious warning**

The path of the disciple is not a weekend excursion, and those of shallow and short-lived motivation should not step upon it lest in time they fall to their greater destruction. This is a grave matter, and the Bible has this to say about it:

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first” (Matthew 12:43-55).

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (II Peter 2:20-22).

“Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay” (Ecclesiastes 5:5).

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:9).

## **The search**

But it is assumed by the Master that those whom he addresses have determined to follow the path to its very end and beyond. So he exhorts them to look for the warrior. This search leads most people astray in the labyrinth of external existence—both material and psychic. Even a somewhat awakened soul may pass lifetimes plunging into the depths and scaling the heights of the material and psychic worlds seeking for power, seeking for knowledge, looking for that “warrior” which can win the victory over ignorance and bring enlightenment. The world could not hold the volumes that might be written to record these desperate searches, searches that by their very nature are doomed to fail. Why? Because they are searches outward rather than inward. There are two incidents that illustrate this very well. One is a kind of humorous parable and one is a “true life” experience. As might be expected, both are from India.

## **The parable**

In earlier times (not really so long ago) devout Hindus used to walk the “pilgrim’s trail” which went in a great circle around the entire Indian subcontinent and connected a series of nearly seventy centers of great spiritual power. There was a man who spent some years on this ambitious pilgrimage, and everywhere he went he would buy an image of the presiding deity of that particular holy place. Finally, toward the end of his pilgrimage, he was staggering along carrying a large wooden box filled with dozens of holy images. Whenever he would stop for the night, he would spread them out, do worship to each in turn, and after several hours go asleep. When he awoke in the morning he would again perform worship of all for some hours, then wrap the images up, put them in the box, and labor onwards.

One day a wandering monk observed all this and said to him: “Why do you bother to worship all these deities? Why don’t you just worship the most powerful god, and then you will get the benefits you would have from worshipping such a multitude.” Then he quickly walked on. The man began to ponder how he could determine which was the most powerful deity. Not being very bright, he hit upon an interesting decision: he would take an image in either hand and crash them together as hard as he could. The image that did not break would be the most powerful deity. So he spent the next couple of hours smashing his images against one another. Since most of them were made of clay or brittle stone, and only one of them was made of metal, in time he was left with that alone. Happy that he had at last found which was the most powerful deity, he tucked it in his bundle of clothing and bedding, gave the wooden box a kick, and went on his way.

After reaching home, he expressed to his parents the desire to have his own household, so they arranged a marriage for him and in time he and his wife lived in their own house. Near the house he constructed a separate small hut in which he installed the deity and worshipped it daily, often boasting to his neighbors about his success in finding the most powerful of the gods. Understanding that meditation is important, he also began to meditate before the image after having first performed worship and—as is the custom in India—giving offerings of food to the deity.

Once as he was meditating, he heard sounds from the altar, and opened his eyes to see that the cat had knocked over the image and was eating the food. Rather than being enraged, he was delighted. Obviously the cat was a more powerful god than the one he had been bothering with! So he began to worship the cat and every day he put out food on the altar, the cat would eat it, and he would sit and meditate, visualizing in his heart the form of the cat.

After some time of this worship, he happened to see his wife shooing the cat away from the house. She whacked it with her broom and kicked it with her foot. The cat ran away, but the man ran and bowed before his wife. "You are greater than all the gods," he told her, "even more powerful than the cat god." So from then on he worshipped his wife. He would have her sit on the altar, and he would meditate on her.

It did not take long for her to get tired of this foolishness, so one day she refused to come and be worshipped. This made him so angry that he picked up a stick and threatened to beat her if she did not cooperate. Off she ran to the hut-temple.

As he put down the stick, he came to the realization that he must be more powerful than his wife, and therefore the greater god. He went and shooed her out of the hut, sat himself on the altar, and began to meditate upon himself. And, it is said, he attained enlightenment, for the true light is of course within.

### **The true story**

A friend of mine from eastern India (Bengal) in his younger life had been a medical doctor with the British Army, although he was himself Indian. "I was a real sahib," he laughed, "well booted, well suited, well hatted, and with my hair all cut and oiled like an Englishman." Considering himself a man of science, he had no time for the "superstitions" of Hinduism or any other religion. All his attention was centered on his career and the support of his wife and their two children—a girl six years old and a boy two years old.

One morning upon arising he noticed that the children were not there. When he asked his wife about their absence, she carelessly answered: "Oh, they are off with their guru." He was literally thunderstruck. In the Himalayan foothill region where he was then living it was not uncommon for children to wander off with the roaming monks who were continually passing through on pilgrimage. He began to shout at his wife: "Guru and kidnapper are the same thing! How could you let them go off like this?" His wife was not affected by his furor, and told him: "They only went out a short time ago, so why don't you go after them?" This he did, though only half dressed.

He went rushing along looking into every street and alley, hoping to get a glimpse of his children. As he emerged from the end of the street at the edge of the town, he turned a corner and encountered an amazing spectacle. Walking along the road was an unusually tall Hindu monk dressed in the traditional orange robes. An immense beard covered the front of his chest, and long hair covered his back. Impressive as his appearance was, the doctor was most struck by another element of the scene. Two dozen or more children were walking along behind the swami in perfect order and silence—two elements usually missing in all levels of Indian life. His two-year-old son was holding on to the swami's robe so he could keep up.

Not knowing what he was going to do or say, the doctor stepped out in front of the swami. "You have my children," was what he said. The swami nodded. "Yes, do you want them back?" "No, they seem to be quite well with you," was the automatic reply. Again the swami nodded. "Then come and see me tonight at my ashram." Having received instructions as to the ashram's location, the doctor went back home in a daze, dressed completely and went to his work.

That evening he went to visit the swami. "You are a medical doctor," said the swami, "so I would like to ask you a medical question. What enables me to raise my hand?" As he said this he raised his hand. The doctor thought it was a silly question but answered: "You do so by a command of the conscious mind to which the nerves and muscles respond." "Can you do the same?" came the surprising challenge. "Of course," responded the doctor as he lifted his hand in imitation of the swami's gesture. "That is

a simple action, and one which you can do without,” remarked the swami. “But as you are speaking with me your heart is beating, your lungs are expanding and contracting, your blood pressure and body temperature are being maintained, and all the functions necessary to maintain life are going on completely without either your conscious thought or conscious volition. Tell me, Mr. Doctor: *Who* is doing that? You need to seek out the one who is maintaining your life in this way. This is your true Self, and without knowing it you are nothing but a puppet.”

Now Dr. Mukherji was used to everyone treating him with respect and even deference because of his medical degree. As a consequence, he, too, had a rather good opinion of himself. But with these simple words the swami revealed the ignorant condition of all unenlightened human beings. Fortunately Dr. Mukherji became a disciple of this monk, and came to discover the identity of the inner warrior.

### **The warrior and the war**

The inner warrior is our true Self, our divine “side” which knows quite well why it has come into this world, and if not hindered by the lower self it will accomplish the purpose of its incarnation: our perfection and enlightenment. It is only this inmost part of ourselves that can win the battle of life. What, then, is to stand aside to let this warrior fight? It is the lower self, revolving around our false ego, that must be put to one side if the inner warrior is to manifest and triumph.

Lest we mistake the nature of the war, thinking that it is an external process, the Master says: “Let him fight in thee.” All transformation, all true spiritual life, is an interior process, although it certainly is reflected in—and even supported by—external factors. But those who have nothing but external philosophizing and observance have not even entered the first gate of Gnosis. The Scribes written about in the Gospels were expert in the Talmudic laws and the Pharisees were painfully scrupulous in their observance of those laws, yet Jesus said: “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). The ego, being outside of us (that is, outside our true Self, the spirit), continually attempts to assert its dominance by luring us into externality and making us mistake it for spiritual realities. If it cannot succeed in this, it takes another tack and becomes extremely philosophical, attempting by a false non-dualism or an abstract “pure spirituality” to dissuade us from engaging in any outer disciplines which would facilitate our inner awakening.

The truth is, valid spiritual search involves a myriad of external actions and observances, that are expressions of spiritual awakening as well as the means to increase that awakening. True spiritual life does not consist in mere abstraction but requires objectification of any inner unfoldment. Yet, the objectifications are but indications and symptoms of spiritual progress, and not the state of evolution itself. As with most things, the truth falls between the two extremes.

### **3. Take his orders for battle and obey them.**

The real battle is within, yet as has been indicated above, it is also reflected outwardly. The lower self needing to be transmuted, it is necessary that it also engage in the struggle—but only as an instrument of the higher Self. So, although it seems contradictory, the battle must be fought both inwardly and outwardly, yet it must be done with the consciousness of the spirit as the sole true doer.

Obviously we cannot take the orders of our higher self if we are not in touch with it and capable of “hearing” its directives. This is why “he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself” (I John 3:3). Unless the various energies that make up our many

bodies are purified to the utmost extent, it is impossible for genuine spiritual communication to take place. However, purification through diet, reformation of life, and purity of morals, though *essential*, are not in themselves sufficient. The “ear” of our purified energies must become attuned to the voice of the spirit. For this, the practice of meditation is indispensable. And the supreme attunement and infusion of divine life is that of communion with and in the living Christ as accomplished through the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments and practices of the Christian disciple.

### **Battle**

Perhaps we should look at this expression: battle. Those who are “lovers not fighters” need not enlist in the ranks of the disciples of any religion, for all traditions indicate that the process of spiritual perfection is a great struggle to the death—the death of the ego and its attendant ignorance. Regarding the path of true perfection through inner and outer warfare, it can be said as truly as it was regarding the American westward expansion: “The weak died along the way, and the cowards never started.” Those who do not wish to struggle unto death/life cannot but fail if they take up this path. Note that I speak of those who do not wish to do so, for in truth there are none who are incapable of success in spiritual life, although this is a popular excuse of the willfully lazy and ignorant. The simple fact of being a human being guarantees our ability to attain spiritual perfection, if we will.

It is indeed true that merely being a human being does not enable us to engage successfully in this war, but it does mean that we can learn how to fight under the direction of the Self/spirit and not under the lying usurper, the ego. Some people become disciples but follow the wrong commander. Letting themselves be attuned back to the ways of earth, they begin to heed the voice of the not-self and swear allegiance to it. And like the folly it is, it leads them into death rather than life.

“Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish” (Luke 14:28-30).

### **Self-examination**

Therefore the aspirant to discipleship should at the outset examine himself to see if he has the necessary disposition of will to accomplish his desire. He should know that the “price” is not paid in dribbles or installments, but that from the beginning he must lay all upon the line without reservation. Those who hope for a close-out sale, layaway plan, or installment plan in spiritual life have simply not understood its—and their—nature. Nor should it be thought that the disciple can take time out in this battle to indulge the egoic desire for cessation of struggle. Just as the worthy soldier is a soldier every moment of his life and is at all times on call, so the disciple must always be in readiness for the battle. In fact, he should be perpetually engaged in the battle. Just as a soldier never forgets his vocation, neither can the disciple. There are myriads of spiritual Simple Simons wandering about, but few are those who possess the penny to obtain the pie. So by employing this terminology the Master indicates the serious and total commitment necessary for spiritual attainment.

### **Obeying the orders**

“And obey them.” It is easy to understand that if soldiers fought according to their own style whenever and wherever they felt it was “the right thing,” there would not only be no victory, there would be annihilation. It is essential that soldiers hear the



orders and obey. There is no place in battle for argumentation, discussion, or demands for justification of the orders. Fortunately, in spiritual life his intelligence is employed by the disciple, and in a viable spiritual system as much information as possible is imparted by the teachers. Yet, there are areas and periods of spiritual life in which the inexperienced disciple cannot intellectually comprehend the whys and wherefores of the fight. At this point the greatest amount of will power must be exerted. That is, the disciple does not surrender his intelligence and will and meekly acquiesce to incomprehensible orders, but rather with full determination he must move ahead without hesitation, and discover by himself the intention and meaning of the commands received. Because of this, throughout the lives of those who have attained the spiritual heights we find that they have had at times to do things which appeared to their inexperienced minds as utterly futile, absurd, or even dangerous. Yet, having performed those required acts, they reaped great benefits. Let me give three examples known to me personally:

1) A man with severe gastro-intestinal illness appealed to an Indian saint for help. The saint's advice was that he eat in large quantities those items which his physician had told him would be fatal for him. He did so unhesitatingly, and was immediately and permanently cured.

2) An acquaintance of mine had lived in Warsaw, Poland. Being very poor, he and a friend frequently slipped into the estate of a wealthy man and caught fish. They knew that this was a most risky thing to do, because anyone caught would be given the severest sentence by the judges because of the rich man's political influence. The verdict of guilty and severe penalty was assured for anyone caught poaching. The two boys were caught, indicted, and a court date was set, though they were allowed to go free. Sure that they would be given a heavy jail sentence, especially because they were Jews, they appealed to a renowned Hasidic rabbi who told them to search through Warsaw and find the smallest padlock available. They followed this seemingly nonsensical directive and for two weeks spent their days and nights searching for the smallest padlock they could find. The rabbi told them that one of them should have this padlock in his pocket when they went into the courtroom. They did so, and the judge threw the case out of court and severely rebuked the wealthy man to his face for treating the young men so harshly.

3) A monastic novice woke up one morning in terrible pain, hardly able to move. By forcing himself he managed to get to the abbot's room, though once there he could not describe to him what he felt, because his teeth were literally chattering from the pain. Instead of showing sympathy, the abbot complained at him for wasting his time, and then in a disgusted though offhanded way commented that perhaps he just needed a drink of water! Although it was a tremendous struggle, the novice managed to get down the stairs and into the kitchen where he drank a glass of water. As the water drained down his throat, the pain drained completely away.

### **Will is the secret**

What was the secret of these three incidents? It was not obedience in the negative sense of canceling out one's intelligence and individual will. Rather, it was the exercise of will in the understanding that there are higher laws which operate within our lives. Also, the act of will linked the consciousness of the "obedient" to the enlightened will of the one giving the directions, and this alignment made healing and help possible.

For a person unacquainted with modern ways, the idea that light can be produced by the flipping of a switch is idiotic. To the inexperienced, the idea that the voice or image of a person on the other side of the world can be produced by turning a knob on

a radio or television set seems equally mad. Those who first tried to fly failed because they quite logically imitated the only flying creatures they knew: birds. When a completely different process was employed using the principles of aerodynamics, human beings were able rise into the air and fly. It is senseless to think that several hundred people can fly in a steel contraption weighing many tons, but they do. Human beings now accomplish numberless goals because they have discovered the laws for their accomplishment. But before the discovery of those laws, such accomplishments were considered “against nature.” Thus, although many of the hidden laws of spiritual evolution are revealed to the disciple, the time does come—more than once—when the disciple must discover further laws on his own. And the gateway to those discoveries is the willful following of the higher commands.

### **Plain facts about battle**

Again let us look at the implications of “Take his orders for battle.” As has already been stated, the aspirant must be ready for struggle and effort. There are those who expect that becoming disciples will put an end to all their troubles both internal and external. There is a great bid in the pseudo-spiritual world for “peace” of all kinds. But any true spiritual path involves internal warfare. Those who instead want the peace which one modern philosopher has described as “the feverlessness of a corpse” should not approach the fires of discipleship.

Further, since the warfare is internal—so also must we understand the enemy to be internal. Looking within ourselves we find with Saint Paul that we are morally divided. Here is how he outlines the thoughts of an disciple that has awakened to his inner conflict:

“The law is spiritual: but I am carnal [physical, fleshly], sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?...So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:14-25).

### **Interior division**

One part of us tends toward the light that is spirit, and one part of us tends toward the darkness that is our ego. As long as there is no sustained spiritual endeavor, the spiritual sleeper has no problem. He may simply attend one of the exoteric churches to pay his “dues” to God and go away having been entertained by the singing of the choir, challenged and uplifted by the words of the preacher, and secure in the feeling of being part of a community. In other words, he can go away “feeling good” about himself and utterly satisfied. But those who would awake and arouse themselves for the journey into light experience something quite different, for immediately the resistance of their dark side comes into play and they have to confess with the cartoon character, Pogo: “We have met the enemy, and he is us!”

This is not pleasing to the ego and, having been assiduously avoided for ages,

everything will be done to deny it. This is why the “good” and the “virtuous” assiduously avoid real spiritual life. Under the veil of noble philosophy and occasional good deeds, they conceal the enemy hidden within their own breast. But it cannot be so for the disciple. Rather, there must be a direct facing of all elements of darkness and ignorance that nest within our own hearts. And that darkness and ignorance must be dispelled. There are no cease-fires, no compromises, no peace treaties in the disciplic life. The enemy must be *destroyed*. (Actually, that which momentarily appears as darkness is transmuted into light, but in the eyes of the ego, the master of that darkness, it appears to be destruction and death.)

### **Dual vision**

So right away the disciple must learn to do two contradictory things: squarely face his inner negativity and ruthlessly war with it, and at the same time keep his eyes on the perfection of God rather than his own imperfection. One ploy of the ego is to get the disciple to become discouraged over his inner evil, and to make him identify with it through shame. While the spectacle of our inner cesspool(s) is quite horrible, we must view the inner filth in the perspective of God’s holiness—a holiness which is essentially ours and which we must consciously reclaim. We are indeed weak, and must have the good sense to realize it. Yet we must not identify with our weakness but with the conquering strength of God and our true spirit-Self. “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (II Corinthians 12:9). “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).

We war against disease because we are aware of the possibility of health and have that goal in mind. Our real interest is not the disease or even the short-term goal of its annihilation, but rather the establishment of our health which is our natural—and therefore rightful—state. This must be the perspective and attitude of the disciple. If we establish this perspective, then the inner carnage, though not pleasant, will yet be neither discouraging nor overwhelming to us.

### **Battle talk**

It should also be understood that the voice of the higher Self will speak to us only of the battle, and the same is true of those teachers illumined by their own higher Self. I mention this because there are those who want to get everything from spiritual life *except* spiritual life. They demand that their higher consciousness and external spiritual teachers give them the means to obtain their desires—all the way from personal health to political dominance. While the fraudulent ego and fraudulent teachers cheerfully comply with these demands (as they must, since they give no true spiritual enlightenment or directive), the higher Self and the saints of God do not. Nor will the higher Self and the saints assist us in roving pointlessly through the realms of the psychic. Those who seek lesser attainments than those of the spirit shall find their own higher Self and the saints of no avail.

Many years ago I met a woman who approached a highly developed yogi with a question. “I want to know just one thing,” she told him. “Can you help me grow a new set of teeth?” When diplomatically told that this was not his specialty (!), she went away without a backward glance. Those who seek for spiritual life must determine that they will be satisfied with nothing else than life in the spirit. And they should expect to receive nothing else.

Face-to-face realization of Truth gives one intuitive conviction and true vision and understanding. True wisdom gives power, for knowledge is the energy that moves the Cosmic Factory. Wisdom produces power over all things and power declares the

absolute authority of infallible Truth. Jesus, unlike the scribes, spoke, not with the false authority of fanaticism or imagination, but with the authority born of realization of God and a knowledge of all His mysteries.

But what about Jesus' assertion: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33)? It means exactly what it says. Our seeking must be for the kingdom of God—that is, the realm of spirit—alone. If we truly have this as our only goal, then the supreme Spirit will Itself supply everything that we need—but not a single unneeded thing that we may merely desire. Since we are dealing with omniscience, it is impossible to deceive It into thinking that we are seeking for the highest alone when in reality we are only pretending to do so in the hopes that we shall get the promised "perks." Here, too, God is not mocked, and we reap only what we actually sow. In *Jane Eyre* we read of the little boy who, when asked if he would rather learn a verse of the Psalms or be given a cookie, always said that he preferred the Psalm to the cookie, and as a consequence received two cookies. He was held up as a spiritual example by his foolish and vain father who did not realize that the boy had simply caught on to the strategy for getting cookies. Such things cannot take place in true spiritual life. We must decide what we want and go after it. And we must go after it in the right place.

**4. Obey him not as though he were a general, but as though he were thyself, and his spoken words were the utterance of thy secret desires; for he is thyself, yet infinitely wiser and stronger than thyself. Look for him, else in the fever and hurry of the fight thou mayest pass him; and he will not know thee unless thou knowest him. If thy cry meet his listening ear, then will he fight in thee and fill the dull void within. And if this is so, then canst thou go through the fight cool and unwearied, standing aside and letting him battle for thee. Then it will be impossible for thee to strike one blow amiss. But if thou look not for him, if thou pass him by, then there is no safeguard for thee. Thy brain will reel, thy heart grow uncertain, and in the dust of the battle filed thy sight and sense will fail, and thou wilt not know thy friends from thy enemies.**

**He is thyself, yet thou art but finite and liable to error. He is eternal and is sure. he is eternal truth. When once he has entered thee and become thy warrior, he will never utterly desert thee, and at the day of the great peace he will become one with thee.**

*Obey him not as though he were a general, but as though he were thyself, and his spoken words were the utterance of thy secret desires; for he is thyself, yet infinitely wiser and stronger than thyself.* Why? Because he is not external to us, but is our own inmost Self. That, of course, is said later on in the sentence, but for now let us consider the implications of the opening phrase. It has already been pointed out that obedience is an act of will, yet the obedience which a soldier gives to a general may arise from factors completely undesirable in the spiritual aspirant. For one thing, the obedience may arise from ignorance—that is, the assumption that the general knows what he does not know. Yet the soldier-disciple must be a man of knowledge. A soldier may also obey because he fears the punishment he would receive if he was slack or disobedient. The disciple must seek God because he loves God, not because he fears the censure or disapproval of God or any punishment from God. This also brings to mind the fact that although it is a laudable thing to wish to flee sorrow and attain peace, if the basis of the disciple's search is simply the desire to avoid pain and attain happiness, he will inevitably fail, for his goal must be God, Who is beyond those dualities. The obedience of the soldier may also spring from the hope of recognition and personal reward. This attitude, too, is

deadly for the disciple. Those who wish recognition in spiritual life are servants of the ego, not the spirit. Such persons disdain the humble and simple means which Christ and the Apostles have given us to scale the heights of the spirit.

The soldier may obey the commands of his general simply because everyone else is doing so. There are those who always want to know how many people adhere to a philosophy before they agree to adopt it. Such persons would never have joined themselves unto Christ and His impoverished little band. If they see that the multitude of people are following a path, then they are ready to fall in step, feeling secure in numbers. But with the disciple it is otherwise. Even though millions might be following the path of the disciple, each one would be following it alone—but alone with God. If God alone is not sufficient for us, then we have no business setting foot upon the highway of holiness. This is just good sense, as a little reflection can reveal. If this battle—and therefore this victory—is internal, then how could it involve anyone else but ourselves? Those who “need” community and association with likeminded companions will not find the path of the disciple at all congenial. For one of the purposes of any legitimate spiritual system is the development to the fullest of the individual’s capacities.

A soldier may obey simply because he thinks—or has been told—it is the right thing to do. Many people take up what they think is spiritual life because they have become convinced that it is the right (or safe) thing to do. This implies that they want to be thought “the right sort” by others and to receive the reward of “the righteous.” Being egoic in nature, such motivation prevents the aspirant from entering upon the path of the spirit. As has been said, the soldier may not himself have decided to take up warfare, but rather have been urged to it by outside factors. Since the battle is internal, no external factors must (or even can) enter into this, for as has also been said, the battle is a solitary endeavor. Why then obey this general? Because he is *you*. We have come back full circle.

### **Passing God by**

*Look for him, else in the fever and hurry of the fight thou mayest pass him.* I think we have all seen this phenomenon. How many people have been so absorbed in “serving God” that they ignored God completely—their busy “service” eliminating Him from their lives. We especially see this in movements that have a “message.” There are the “movers” and “go-getters” that are busily missionarying others to get them into the flow of things. There are those brisk, efficient, and vocal people who seem to be living for nothing but “the cause.” Yet, when questioned closely, they will be discovered to have never studied their principles in depth and (if such is a part of the “message”) neither do they engage in the practices which they so busily are cajoling others into. And “busy” is their watchword-rationalization. “Oh, I am just so busy promoting The Work that I have never had time to read that,” or “No, I have just been so busy getting things organized and spreading The Word, that I never have time for meditation” (or whatever else it is that they tell everybody else to do). These are truly the empty trash cans that rattle so aggressively. If we carefully observe missionaries of any sort we will discover that their missionarying is a cover for their own slackness and emptiness. They are dedicated to harvesting, but not to the Lord of the Harvest; they are wells without water, clouds without rain.

So we must fight, but our eyes must not be on the fight but on the “general” of the fight, “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). Only those who keep their eyes continually fixed upon God can ever do the work of God, can ever become one with God.

Let us not pass by two of the words in this phrase: fever and hurry. This is an assurance that the battle will indeed become heated and at times even hectic. Again, those who want the peace of inactivity will be disappointed in disciplic life. It is essential for the disciple to be always at “fever-pitch” and ready for more. I frequently liken the life of the disciple to jumping on the back of a tiger. The ride is terrifying, but the consequences of getting off are much worse, though many—if not most—do, and in consequence are eaten alive by the fangs and claws of evil.

*And he will not know thee unless thou knowest him.* This reminds us of the words of Jesus when He declared that the time will come when He shall say to those who pretend to be His followers: “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). Naturally, this seems puzzling, for how can there be anything which an omniscient being does not know? Obviously, the word “know” has a greater connotation than in its common usage. Oftentimes in the Bible we find exhortations to God requesting Him to “hear” petitions. In older English, “hearken” meant not only to experience an auditory stimulus, but to pay attention and respond to what has been spoken. It is the same way with “know.” To be known by our own higher self, the individualized spirit, and the Supreme Self, God, is to have a dynamic communion established between us and those divine entities.

We read in the Bible: “Draw nigh unto God, and He shall draw nigh unto thee” (James 4:8). Long after these words were written by the apostle, our Lord Jesus Christ said to Saint Catherine of Siena: “Think of Me, and I will think of you.” When the prodigal son arose and went back to his father, his father came running to meet him (Luke 15:20). Not only are we mirrors of God, God is also a mirror of us. Therefore when we look to God He looks to us; when we hear God He hears us; when we call unto God He calls unto us; and when we strive to know Him He knows us—in the sense of acknowledgment and communication with us.

### **Understanding “self”**

It is crucial that we understand the nature of the word “self.” Many people think that self-knowledge consists in studying the psychology of their egoic mind. Some even more deluded people think that self-knowledge is arrived at by studying their genealogy. But we must always distinguish between the lie and the truth—that is, between the ego-mind-body complex (including all the astral and causal bodies) and the pure consciousness which is not only our essential nature, but our *only* nature. That is, we must come to the knowledge of ourselves as waves of light within the ocean of light that is God. And so, when we speak of Self-knowledge we are speaking exclusively of the knowledge of the eternal spirit, the true “us.” If, however, we make the body and (lower) mind the basis, the frame of reference for the “fight,” then truly all hell breaks loose, for the fight can only be waged in and by the spirit.

*If thy cry meet his listening ear, then will he fight in thee and fill the dull void within.* The motive for attaining Self-knowledge is utterly pragmatic: Religion is the path to God—that is, the process of living communication with God that in time results in our reunification with God. “The dewdrop falls into the shining sea,” as someone so poetically expressed it. We see the world filled with religion, but very little spiritual attainment. Why is this? The founders of all true religions spoke from the consciousness of pure spirit. Those who heard them, being enmeshed in the nets of both material and psychic existence and held under the hitherto undisputed sway of the ego, heard the words of the ever-free within the context of their bondage and quite naturally turned the words that were spirit and life (John 6:63) into words of matter and mind. But if they caught the message of the necessity for transcendence of matter and

mind, through following the teachings of the masters they transferred the focus of their consciousness into spirit and successfully liberated themselves from the ancient bondage. Functioning in their true nature as spirits, they attained true freedom: liberation.

### **The results...?**

“*If thy cry....*” Spiritual life depends upon the correctness of our approach to God. Just as there is a right and wrong way to use mechanisms of communication such as the telephone, so there are right and wrong ways to attempt communication with the Supreme Reality. The master wants the aspirant to understand this and therefore weigh carefully every aspect of his search to make sure that all is as it should be. Just as a sensible driver checks over his vehicle from time to time, and during his driving keeps an eye on the various indicators, so also must the spiritual aspirant do. I once heard a sermon entitled “Doing the Right Thing in the Right Way in the Right Place at the Right Time for the Right Reason.” If we do not have all five of these Rights, then our spiritual endeavors will be either fruitless or produce a negative effect.

Also, the master wants the aspirant to know that he has no “right” to expect any result in his spiritual life. Genuine spiritual life is a continual dissolution of our egoic control and a proportionate increase in the control of God over our lives. As Saint John said: “He must increase, I must decrease” (John 3:30). This is not a popular view, but the many have never trod the blessed narrow path to God at any era of history. To put it more plainly, we have no business expecting that God will do all things according to our ideas. Real spiritual life consists in total conformity of ourselves to God, and if God conformed to us in any way our progress would cease. Complaining about God’s lack of responsiveness is a common trait of the demonic ego.

### **Thy cry**

Again: “*If thy cry....*” The master uses the word “cry” to convey the necessity of total mind-gripping intensity of spiritual desire on our part. God does not hear the equivalent of a whisper, a mumble, a quiet speaking, or even an emphatic statement on our part. Rather, the spiritual equivalent of the “man overboard!” cry is needed for us to gain a response from God.

Sri Ma Anandamayi commonly addressed all men as “father.” Once a man, sitting directly in front of Her, asked: “Ma, why does God not answer our prayers?” Mother turned Her head to one side and absentmindedly muttered “Father,” in a low tone. Turning to the other side, She did the same, but slightly louder. Looking down at Her hands, Mother repeated “Father” in a conversational tone. Then, looking directly into his eyes, She shouted “Father!” as She gestured toward him. Taken by surprise, he jumped to his feet, joined his hands in salutation, and responded: “Yes, Ma, what is it?” Mother began laughing merrily and replied: “I have given you your answer. You did not answer My saying ‘Father,’ until I directed My attention to you completely and called out with intense concentration. So it is with you and God. Change the way you pray, and you will get an answer.”

Keeping in mind that the Master is speaking of both the individual Self and the cosmic Self, we must also realize that we cannot “get in touch with ourselves” without equal intensity on our part. Just as the scum floats on the surface of the water, veiling the water from our eyes, so the body, mind, and ego are blinding us to our true Self, stifling the Self and rendering it inoperative. Therefore intense and sustained effort is needed to remove the veils and let the Self shine forth. This is why in Oriental philosophy it is often stated that the individual Self is very hard to find, but that once

this is done, then God is relatively easy to find. First we must realize (awaken) our individual spirit before there is any possibility of our realization of the infinite Spirit. This is why the great Indian philosopher, Sri Ramanuja, taught that Self-realization was the prerequisite for God realization.

### **Getting God's attention**

In both Old and New Testaments we are told that God must hear, see, and know us. Since God is an omniscient being, how is it possible for anything to be unheard, unseen, or unknown by Him? Obviously this is impossible. But the inspired writers are thinking in a totally pragmatic or practical sense. Although God does indeed hear, see, and know us in the highest levels of being, it is meaningless unless it is translated into direct operation within our lives. That is, God must become operative within the spheres of our interior and external existence. Otherwise, for all practical purposes, God does not even exist—at least for us.

We, on the other hand, having awakened after the course of countless ages of virtual spiritual unconsciousness, need to arouse our true selves. Then we will find that God, too, will awake and arise in relation to us. As Saint Paul wrote: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee life" (Ephesians 5:14). At the same time we need to keep in mind the discomfiting statement of Jeremiah that: "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2). We have to face the fact that throughout the ages which have lapsed during our numberless incarnations, the debris of ignorance has steadily accumulated, suffocating us and cutting us off from all sight and communication with God. Saint Paul tells us that whatever we sow we shall reap (Galatians 6:7). We must eliminate one by one the obstacles we have placed between us and God until the effects of our "sowing" throughout previous births, have been undone.

### **Work to be done**

Twice in this commentary I have quoted the old saying about the American westward expansion, and I want to do it again: "The cowards never started, and the weak died along the way." This is absolutely true of spiritual life—mostly because people have no idea just what it entails. This is why the Lord assured the Apostles that only few (at a time) are saved. ("Strait is the gate, and narrow [is] the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). For some strange reason, people think that however much effort and struggle are needed even for simple success in material life, spiritual life should require no effort whatsoever, unless it be an effortless reaching out and taking of the divine benefits. This is seen to be utterly absurd when we consider that we have to counteract the negative effects (karmas and samskaras) of literally thousands of previous births—including the pre-human ones—before we can even begin to move a fraction of an inch toward transcendence of the human condition. Having gotten ourselves completely into the Devil's Stewpot, we are suffering almost hopelessly. Further, we think that the only thing needful is for someone to put out the fire. We are seemingly unaware of the crucial need to get out of the pot, clean up, and heal our damages. Consequently, the real beginning of spiritual life is undreamed of by us; and when we do encounter it we draw back in distaste. "Oh! how negative!" we declaim with unrighteous indignation, "God would never expect that of anybody. It is unreasonable." And so we boil on in the Stewpot.



## **Buy today?**

In today's pop culture the proof that a commodity is worth having is a dazzling array of testimonies from people who are just thrilled to death at the instant and easy way their every wish has been fulfilled just by getting the product. This being so, fake religion and fake meditation, like other fake merchandise, is touted as the instant remedy for all ills as well as the means to effortlessly get anything desired from God Who is, as one "born again" Hollywood starlet put it in a magazine interview some years ago: "a livin' doll." So they present statements from "satisfied customers" of the "At last I have found it," "I never realized it would be this easy," "It is far more than I expected," and (of course) "I should have done it years ago" type.

In contrast, Jesus told seekers: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23), and "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake", (Matthew 10:22, Mark 13:13, Luke 21:17) and "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it" (Luke 17:33. See also Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, and Luke 9:24).

## **What it means**

To enter upon the path of discipleship is to begin the Great Work of spiritual alchemy, the transmutation of the (presently) human into the divine—in other words, the Great Struggle. For Jesus said: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). The Greek word translated "strive" is *agonisthite*, the word from which we get "agony," and means to struggle even unto death. And it is death we are talking about—the death of our lower nature and all ties to the world's lower evolution—death that must be voluntarily undergone in order that we may rise into "newness of life" (Romans 6:4), the life that is Christ. These are not very inspiring, or perhaps even motivating, words, but they are necessary for the serious seeker. For Jesus said that we must count the cost before we begin our spiritual endeavor. ("Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Luke 14:28-30).

Part of the cost is the expunging of all the negative and delusive conditionings produced in us by tens of thousands of earthly incarnations—conditionings which are present within us at this moment as vital factors within the hidden depths of our mind—which itself has become transformed into our own enemy.

Throughout history evil men have specialized in turning people into instruments of hate for the destruction of their own family, country, and race. For example, in Turkey prior to the First World War, Christian children were kidnapped and brought up to be an organized military force against Christians. These men, called Jannissaries, formed death squads for the extermination of tens of thousands (and ultimately millions) of Christians—many of them murdering their own family members. They were renowned for their fanatical hatred of Christians which exceeded even that of the Moslem Turks. The same unhappy phenomenon was repeated at the time of World War II in the Jewish guards of the Warsaw Ghetto who had taken on the attitude of the Nazis toward their own people, eventually slaughtering them, and in turn being themselves killed by the Germans.

So it is with us: we have been conditioned to externality and materiality through our experience in the many thousands of bodies which we have inhabited during our countless incarnations. And as Saint Paul tells us: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit,

and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17). Because of this conditioning, all of our bodies, gross and subtle, including the desire and will bodies, are polarized to “the flesh” of material consciousness. As a result, we have for incarnation after incarnation refused to even listen to the truths of higher consciousness. Then for more lives we listened, but only passively, and did not a thing about it. Now, in this incarnation, we have decided to “arise and go” with the prodigal son back to the Father.

But this decision is both nebulous and tenuous. That is, we neither know what our rising and going will entail, nor do we really will it except with the minutest portion of our intellect. Everything else that is “us” is against us in this matter. Yet, all the elements of our being must in time be polarized to this godly intention and turned into instruments for its accomplishment. For this to occur, we must grapple with them one by one and submit them to our will. Our many levels (bodies) are not of themselves evil, but they have been negatively polarized and turned away from the truth we seek to unveil. We may think of our many bodies and faculties as the flock of a shepherd which have strayed and become wild. Before they can be returned to the fold where they belong, they will have to be both captured and tamed. Although I have used the simile of sheep, most of them are more like wild horses and wild elephants than merely skittish sheep. Consequently, spiritual life is much more like “bronco busting” than the effortless ethereal fantasy most of us hold. We like to think of ourselves as floating angels rather than sweating wranglers, but that is exactly what we must become, at least in the spirit.

### **Beyond the mind**

Spiritual life cannot be encompassed by the superficial desire of the mind. Those who attempt spiritual life with such a basis will ultimately give up in frustration. To bring together all the components of our being and harmonize them with divine consciousness is as futile for the mind as the counting of the grains of sand on the ocean floor. It is just simply beyond the mind’s scope. Anyone who has ever tried the path of “positive thinking” or “replacing bad habits with good habits” knows how in time those endeavors prove to be utterly worthless. What then is to be done? Exactly what the Master tells us: We must rouse up the divine in us, for only the spirit—being the source of all—is capable of gathering all the aspects of our being into one and directing them toward the divine goal. For this reason, psychological mind games, however noble and philosophical they might seem, are futile. Rather, we must go directly to the spirit. Even more, we must *activate* the spirit. Spiritual consciousness has been symbolized throughout the ages by the sun—specifically, by the rising sun. Much of the physical world lies dormant and silent in the night, but at dawn everything comes to life around us, as we have all experienced. This is why the Bible speaks of the sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:7) dawning upon us (II Peter 1:19).

### **The threefold process**

Again, we must realize that the Master is telling us to tap into our inmost consciousness which is the spirit. This is done primarily through the practice of meditation. In silent meditation we contact the transcendent aspect of our being. This divine entity, our spirit, is the source of all the external levels of our being. Just as God the infinite emanates all the evolutionary worlds we call “creation,” so in the same way our individual spirit—god the finite—has emanated the multifarious bodies in which we find ourselves. Therefore it alone can really encompass and master them and

transmute them back into pure spirit, thus completing its own evolution. This is one of the reasons Jesus tells us “Seek ye first the kingdom, and all this shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

### **In the beginning: God**

It is crucial for spiritual aspirants to realize that the path to God must begin with God. Right away we must be contacting God and invoking the divine consciousness within. This sounds like an extremely difficult thing to accomplish, and if the aspiration was all on our part alone, it would be not only be difficult, it would be impossible. But the Master has told us a wonderful fact when he says: “If thy cry meet his listening ear...” By this he indicates that God the Infinite and god the finite (our own spirit) is ever listening for our call. God is not far away, nor is He asleep or deaf. Rather, He is nearer than our own thoughts and is conscious of every movement within our being. It is we who are failing to get the message, not God, and we must realize that.

At the same time we can be one hundred percent optimistic about God’s attention to us. To speak of God’s “listening ear” is to also indicate that God is eager to hear our call and to respond. Although everything is just fine on God’s end, things are clogged up on our side, and that is why the Master has put the word “if” in his statement. But this need not worry us, for when we apply spiritual methodology, it is not our lesser power or lesser will that is involved, but rather the divine power and will of our own divine spirit and ultimately—since our spirit is rooted in God and takes its very existence from Him—the infinite power and will of God.

However restless and distracted the mind may be at times in meditation and throughout the day, it is still in the midst of the divine world through its invocation of the Divine Consciousness. Again, we can be thoroughly optimistic regarding the eventual outcome of our meditation and invocation if they are steadily maintained, for it is the divine power which is acting in us through such activity. The divine seed, when carefully tended, will in time come to full growth and fruition. Patience is needed to persevere in our spiritual endeavors and in our waiting for the results of those endeavors, therefore Jesus counsels us: “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). From the divine source Himself we have been assured that in time we shall “possess”—master—the totality of our existence. However, that will not be the end but only the beginning. Once we “go in and possess the land” (Deuteronomy 1:8) we must then begin the return of “ourselves” to pure spirit (consciousness).

### **Spiritual war**

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7-9). This is a symbol of what takes place when our cry does in truth reach the listening ear of the divine Self. Then the principle of pure evolution—that is, the force that impels us to return to God—arises as Michael, the Prince of the Heavenly Hosts (powers), and makes war with the ancient power of delusion and ignorance that has gripped us throughout creation cycle upon creation cycle, even ascending into the “heaven” of our consciousness and darkening it to the point of seeming extinguishment, and in this way plunging us into total material awareness, at least on the conscious “waking” level of the mind.

It is the spirit alone that wages the divine warfare, for it is the spirit alone that can win. Those whose minds, emotions, and intellects direct the warfare are doomed to

defeat, by the very nature of their “warriors.” Thus if we would be successful in spiritual life we must see that it is indeed that: *spiritual*. And meditation is the means of ensuring that our warfare is spiritual. Such a warfare is, as we say, invincible and shall lead in time to victory unless, tragically lead astray by Satan (the power of delusion in the cosmos and our energy-nature), we cry “halt” to the endeavor. And this does, indeed, happen.

From the Master’s words we can infer that one sign of being truly spiritually awakened is the process of inner warfare. Many, possessing an utterly false understanding of religious and spiritual life, engage in external warfare, enmeshed in their egoic minds and their concerns with the external world and its inhabitants. This futile warfare takes a myriad of forms, all the way from substituting good thoughts for bad thoughts and “cleaning up the vocabulary” to the writing of hysterical polemics against “heresies” and even the ultimate folly of imprisoning or killing “heretics.” We, too, must be vigilant in our spiritual life, and make sure that we do not slip into a like error. For although spiritual life must of necessity be manifested externally, it nevertheless is ever based in the spirit and is at all times directed by the spirit.. As Saint Paul asked: “Ye did run well; who did hinder you?” (Galatians 5:7). We often begin with warfare in the spirit but our habit of ego-dominance draws us away into the warfare centered in lesser realms.

It should be realized, then, that the truly spiritually awakened are not those that smile with wan sweetness and speak of their “great peace” or their supposed illumination. Rather, they are those who make no claims whatsoever about their spiritual life because they are much too busy successfully leading it. Those spiritual teachers or teachings that do not make the necessity for interior warfare clear to us have no part whatsoever with Him Who said: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34).

### **How is it done?**

Just how will our spirit carry on the interior warfare? This is an important question, as millions of deluded people throughout the world are convinced that God is talking to them or managing their lives or that their higher selves are in control when in actuality their satanic ego, the true Antichrist, is in total domination. The answer is that our spirit wages war with but one weapon: the invocation of higher consciousness. This is literally so, and not to be taken symbolically. Our spiritual will is the sword in the hand of Michael which casts out Satan from our being (Revelation 12:7-9) so that we can truthfully say: “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ” (Revelation 12:10). Ultimately everything that exists is one with God. However, all objects within creation appear to have an existence independent of God, and are actually veils which hinder our seeing the truth of their essential being—God.

In the Book of Revelation we find this dramatic symbol. When Saint John first sees Jesus, in his description he tells us that: “out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword” (Revelation 1:16). Later he describes this astonishing symbolic scene: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod

of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords...And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which [sword] proceeded out of his mouth” (Revelation 19:11-16, 21).

Authentic spiritual life, especially in the beginning, is often more frightening than it is reassuring. This rather frightening picture is a really mild version of the account of the defeat of the evil forces by the Mother aspect of God that is found in the Hindu scripture known as the Chandi. There the Mother roves over a great battlefield, cutting off the heads of demons with Her sword. Both the Biblical and the Puranic accounts are about the same thing: the descent of the illumining power of God and its destruction of evil. This is the only possible spiritual victory. It will be good, then, to analyze the account Saint John gives of this, especially as it underscores the truth that the book of Revelation has nothing to do with world prophecy, as Yogananda often said, but is an esoteric, symbolic text about the soul’s enlightenment. And it gives us a perfect picture of the spiritual battle the Master is speaking about.

### **Heaven: consciousness**

*And I saw heaven opened.* “Heaven” is a symbol of the higher consciousness, including the astral and causal brains in which are located a great number of centers or points (chakras) of higher awareness. These centers are usually dormant in the ordinary person, but in the disciple at the touch of spiritual power they become enlivened and activated. So this awakening of our inner spiritual power is essential to our spiritual development. This activation can also be described as an “opening.” Saint John, then, is giving us a picture of the disciple whose “heaven” has been “opened” by the advent of spiritual consciousness. Then and then only can Christ become fully active within us. And by Christ we mean both the universal Christ and our own individual Christ nature.

### **Inner power**

*And behold a white horse.* The esoteric tradition of Christianity comes directly from India, as did the esoteric tradition of Judaism which was derived from the esoteric tradition of Egypt whose wisdom had come directly from India. In India the horse is always a symbol of cosmic energy and the empowerment produced by the awakening of that energy in the individual. Saint John is telling us that he perceived the descent of the active Divine Presence into the individual. And he perceived the plenitude of this power, for he described it as being white, the color that embodies and contains all other colors which are but its “rays.” But such an event is not only the advent of power, it is also the advent of consciousness—specifically, Divine Consciousness, the Christ Who “sits” upon the white horse of Divine Power. Spiritual opening, then, is not just a giving of power to us so we may use it according to our own wish and will, however sincere or devout. Rather it is the preparation for the active descent of Christ into the depths of our being, and from those depths it is Christ Himself Who, with the cooperation of our will (“workers together with God”), shall direct and ultimately accomplish the transmutation of our humanity into divinity.

### **God the warrior**

*And he that sat upon him [the white horse] was called Faithful and True.* These two titles or names indicate that Divinity itself is being shown here, for Faithful in the sense of remaining forever unchanged (James 1:17), and Truth in the sense of being the sole reality (I Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 45:6, 21), are titles that are to be properly applied to God

alone. These titles also tell us something of the purpose of Christ's descent into us. He shall reveal—make us faithful to—our true eternal nature and shall turn us away from all unfaithfulness in the form of self-forgetfulness and all modes of life and thought which are contradictory to—and therefore betrayal of—our essential nature as part of God. Further, He shall make us “true” both in the architectural sense of making us conform perfectly to the divine image and pattern which is inherent in our eternal nature and to the dispelling of all that is false within our consciousness and life sphere, as well as finally restoring us to our true home or base of consciousness which is God Himself. So to be a Christian is to be made Faithful and True by Christ our divine Archetype.

### **No peace?**

As already quoted, the Lord Jesus told His apostles that He had not come to bring peace but a sword—despite the Christmas slogans about “Prince of Peace” and “peace on earth.” Those who follow Christ do attain peace, for to them He said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). But how does He do this? By transferring the center of our consciousness from the never-peaceable world to the ever-peaceable spirit. Peace is not a state of mind or emotion, for the mind and emotions are by their nature in constant flux and incapable of peace, but is rather the permanent condition of the spirit. The wise know that there can never be peace on earth, but there is ever peace in the spirit. However everything comes with a price; and the price of true interior peace is interior war. Consequently Saint John continues: “And in righteousness He doth judge and make war.”

### **Clear sight**

Jesus declared that he was the Light and that “there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew 10:26, Luke 12:2). This being so, the advent of the living Christ into the devoted disciple produces an impartial and shadowless light of inner perception by means of which the disciple sees fully all that is within him and discerns truly its character. This is not a particularly enjoyable experience since, except for our pure spirit, all that is within us is darkened and defiled with ignorance and delusion. If the light that produces this revelation was merely of our own intellect, we would understandably become depressed and discouraged. But since it is the light of Christ that shines, we are actually made optimistic, even cheerful, by it, for that light reveals to us that all darkness and delusion is merely temporary, only an illusion that shall be dispelled in time through our perseverance in spiritual endeavor. “You have to be cruel to be kind,” certainly applies to the advent of Christ into our life. To our ego the resulting illumination will appear merciless—and so it is—to the ego. But to the imprisoned spirit it is the sweet dew of mercy, for it will not allow a single bond to remain upon it.

Those who have received the light of Christ must straightaway set about scrutinizing every aspect of their existence, internal and external. And this must be done without sparing the egoic likes and dislikes of either ourselves or others. It is essential that we force ourselves to face the total truth about ourselves and that with which we have mistakenly identified through so many incarnations. Too long have we been the “whited sepulchers” of which Jesus spoke (Matthew 23:27), often making religion or “spirituality” the whitewash that covered our inner darkness and death. (“And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness” Luke 11:39.)

### **The full picture**

A striking simile of our condition is given in the book of Ezekiel, where he tells us that an angelic messenger “brought me to the door of the court [of the Temple]; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?” (Ezekiel 8:7-12).

This is a picture of someone who—as is usual with human beings—is completely unaware of his inner, or subconscious, mind. Everything seems to be just fine, and he is confident that he is indeed a temple of God, that in him dwells the eternal Spirit. And this is true (I Corinthians 3:16), but there is more he needs to know. Being unaware of his inner mind, he perceives only the minor symptoms of its condition in the form of his conscious thoughts and impulses. Although they may not be completely positive, they do not seem to be very serious, in fact he usually looks upon them as harmless flaws which he hopes one day to correct. They appear to be of little significance. But these little flaws (“holes”), when investigated, are seen to be of an entirely different character. They are not the little breaches in the wall of consciousness which he thought they were, but they are actually immense doors—doors through which negative elements have entered into his being and festered there, poisonous and deadly.

Medical research has shown that the human body is teeming with parasites, bacteria, and viruses—all invaders alien and destructive to the body. So it is with us psychologically. When we begin to examine the wall of our mind which is separating us from higher consciousness, we will find what at first appear to be small cracks or holes which will with scrutiny be revealed as vast fissures and breaches which both weaken the structure and permit the influx of inimical elements. In other words, where before we perceived soundness we perceive decay and destruction. Through continual birth and death in the distorted realms of material existence, our entire inner makeup has likewise become distorted and turned into an instrument of spiritual blindness and bondage. This must be clearly perceived and remedied before there is any possibility of our moving along the upward path of spiritual evolution.

The major cause of spiritual failure is this lack of interior insight on the part of those who consciously aspire to higher life. If the seeker is unaware of his inner dilemma, not taking care of either his mind, emotions, or “mere externals” (which presently comprise more than 90% of his conscious life), his endeavors are completely futile and only serve to delude him into thinking that he is truly traveling the Path. In India they give the simile of a man who gets in the boat and rows all night only to find at dawn that he is in the same place because he forgot to pull up the anchor. Before we can even hope to impel the boat of our individual consciousness across the ocean of delusion to the shore of enlightenment, we must first detach ourselves from all things that keep us anchored in our present status. And we must not content ourselves with detachment from just one anchor, for we have hundreds—if not thousands and millions—of anchors holding us firmly to the shore of ignorance. Intuiting this, the rich young man of the Gospels asked Jesus what he still lacked in his spiritual life, even though he had observed the Law so scrupulously (Matthew 19:16-20).

## **Words are not enough**

No man belongs in prison. We are created to move freely over the earth, pursuing our livelihood. Suppose a tyrannical government were to seize us and put us into a dungeon, chaining us, hands, feet, and neck, to the wall as was done in previous centuries. We do not belong there, it is certainly unjust for us to be there. Yet it would do no good for well-meaning people to open the doors of the prison and call to us: “You should not be here! It is not your nature! Your nature is freedom! Come out and be free!” How can we go forth, being chained to the very stones of the dungeon? If our would-be liberators, seeing our non-emergence, began to speak to us in ringing tones of confidence, assuring us that we truly were set free, that we should simply “take it on faith,” affirm our freedom, and “act on it,” what would they accomplish except our frustration? In time, we might even call out to them to keep silence, go away, and leave us alone in peace. This is exactly our status, especially when encountering worthless religion and spiritual philosophy. The bonds must be cut! Not just one bond or nearly all bonds, but every single one. And then we will find that we must teach ourselves to walk before we can escape our imprisonment. Furthermore, like the long-caged bird we will no doubt find the prospect of freedom terrifying and will have to force ourselves to escape the dungeon. It will be helpful for us to look at the raising of Lazarus as it relates to this necessity for practical measures on our part if we would truly lay hold on life.

“[Jesus] cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44). Although the divine voice of Jesus had miraculously called Lazarus to life, it was not enough. He was alive internally, but externally he was bound up in the grave clothes—wrapped round and round exactly like an Egyptian mummy. (The Jews naturally drew many of their burial customs from the Egyptians.) He was living but helpless, completely unable to function. If he had remained in that state he would have died of starvation or worse. The will of God had made him live, but the will of human beings was required to release that life and maintain it. Jesus made Lazarus live, but human action was needed to make him free. This is symbolic of the truth that although the inner call to life may make us inwardly alive, we must ourselves get busy and begin loosening the bands of personal ignorance and limitation until at last we are set free—both by God and by ourselves. The call to life is not enough; we need to tread The Way of Life as well.

## **Judgment is needed**

Perhaps the final thing we need to say on the Ezekiel parable regarding secret “idolatry” is the simple statement of Saint Paul: “*Examine yourselves, . . . prove your own selves*” (II Corinthians 13:5). It is not always fun, but it is always profitable. For if we would be united to Christ, the Faithful and True, we must ourselves be faithful and true. And without true interior judgement this is impossible. What is *true* judgement? Saint John has already told us by saying that “*In righteousness He doth judge.*” That is, He judges according to the standards of the spirit—of the eternal verities. None of the delusive taint of relative finite existence is in the true judgment of God. Rather, everything is measured “with eternity’s values in view,” as a twentieth-century hymn says. “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matthew 7:2). We, therefore, must be sure that in all things our consciousness is aligned with the divine consciousness, and that we evaluate all things according to the ultimate values of the spirit.

It is obvious, then, that there can be no version of “situation ethics” or “non-



judgmentalism” in the life of the spiritual aspirant. Absolutes are necessary; but they must be the divine absolutes and not those of our own limited thinking. This is why the saints and masters are always seen to be a (seeming) mixture of liberal and conservative attitudes, displaying both flexibility and inflexibility in their words and deeds. They simply operate according to a totally different system than that of the world. “The recollected mind is awake in the knowledge of the Atman which is dark night to the ignorant: the ignorant are awake in their sense-life which they think is daylight: to the seer it is darkness” (Bhagavad Gita 2:69). No wonder, then, that the enemies of Saint Paul accused him of turning the world upside-down by his teaching (Acts 17:6). Those who dwell in the mirage are ever hostile to those dwelling in reality.

As can be expected, there are many versions of “righteousness,” but all except for God’s righteousness are really unrighteousness. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). This is why Jesus warned His apostles that their righteousness must not be that of the scribes and the Pharisees—of the intellect or the body—but that which is of the spirit (Matthew 5:20). For the spirit alone is real, and therefore alone is true and “right.” And only those who are centered in the “right” perspective of their own divine spirit can possibly judge accurately. But judge they must.

### **The right response**

We have pretty well covered the idea that spiritual life must be a warfare, so we need not go into that at this point. However, we should note that the divine warring of Christ comes as a natural consequence of His judgment. That is, having diagnosed the situation correctly, He responds in the correct mode, that of spiritual warfare, which is ultimately a matter of purification. Our Christhood is already a settled fact. It need not be attained, but rather revealed, which is why Saint Paul speaks of Jesus being “revealed from heaven” (II Thessalonians 1:7). The process of the revelation of Christ is the process of purification. Saint John points this out to us for, after assuring us that we are even now truly “the sons of God,” and that we shall indeed “see Him [Christ] as He is,” he concludes “He that hath this hope in himself purifies himself even as he is pure” (I John 3:3). So when we speak of warfare, we are not speaking of anger, hatred, or hostility, but of a *catharsis*, a thorough cleansing and purification such as gold undergoes in the fire when it is refined. The consciousness produced by the spiritual crucible is appropriately referred to by Jesus as “gold tried in the fire” (Revelation 3:18).

### **Eyes of spirit**

*His eyes were as a flame of fire.* This has several meanings, and we will consider some of them. As already pointed out, the Book of Revelation is an esoteric treatise on the passage of the human being into unity with God. The simile of the Lord’s flaming eyes directly relates to the psychic anatomy of the disciple and therefore to the science of Yoga.

That center of power in the subtle bodies known as the “third” or spiritual eye is a point from which two rays stream forth (in yogic treatises the rays of the chakras are spoken of poetically as “petals”). These are the two “flames” of the Lord’s divine single eye. However, Saint John does not exactly say that His eyes were as two flames, but rather they were as a single flame. Peripherally this means that although the Lord appears to perceive and function within relativity, His consciousness is in perfect unity. For Him the two have become one.

A further meaning is that the dual rays of the spiritual eye, when concentrated upon or functioning under the will of an adept, are concentrated and united into one

powerful ray of will-intelligence. When this ray is trained on any object it will respond according to the adept's will. For example, Jesus focussed this ray on the water at Cana and turned it into wine by an act of His will (John 2:1-11). Whenever an adept or master looks at an individual with full attention, he can change that person's bodies and consciousness.

One time, before going back to my birthplace for a brief visit and a transaction of some business, I told an advanced disciple of Yogananda about my plans, commenting that I hoped that returning to my old environment would not disrupt the new spiritual habits that I had developed—especially that of meditation. As I was finishing my words, for some reason I can no longer recall I looked away to something slightly beyond him and to the side. Suddenly an indescribable surge of power began rising from the base of my spine upwards, producing in me a state of intense clarity of mind and a feeling of perfect ease. Looking back at him, I saw that he had tilted his head slightly to one side and was looking at me with great attention. I realized that this was his blessing to aid me in maintaining my spiritual life when I was far away. After some time, the sensation subsided, and he made a comment as to his being assured that I would manage just fine. And so I did—through his blessing. But a master can make any kind of change he wills. Being perfect in his alignment with the divine will, all that he does is healing, enlightening, and beneficial. Although most good things in this relative world have a negative counterpart, this power of divine blessing does not. It is certain that evil persons can indeed project negative forces and perpetrate what is known as a psychic attack. But it is a feeble thing compared with the great power accessible to the masters that are perfect in the love of God.

A more inward aspect of this subject is this: When the Christ enters within us, His divine sight is shared with us and we come to see as He sees. Now that sounds very exalted, but what it really comes out to be is that His divine eye reveals to us all that lies within between us and our true spirit. In other words, the muck and debris of millions (if not billions) of incarnations is revealed in perfect and devastating clarity. This is because the ignorance must be cleared out of us before the truth of ourselves, of our spiritual being, can be discovered. Most people expect that when they sit to meditate they will be wafted away on a magic carpet of beatitude into the realms of infinite bliss. This is like a kindergartner expecting that on the first day of school he will receive his doctorate amidst gratifying applause. It will not happen!

### **Looking within**

I once heard a yogi say that meditation was the true confession, for the mind divulges all its secrets—most of them ugly as well as trivial. In the book of Revelation we find the statement that at one time in the aspirant's development the sea, death, and hades ["hell"] shall give up their dead for judgment (Revelation 20:13). Then they come and stand before the judgment throne and have their nature revealed in the Light of Christ. The sea represents the conscious mind, death represents the negative will, and hades represents the subconscious mind. Rather than being a little event, this is a cataclysmic psychological process, part of the purification which is necessary for enlightenment. In meditation we are mistaken to be annoyed by the thoughts, memories, emotions, and other flotsam and jetsam which come floating into the focus of our consciousness. These are certainly objectionable if they manage to pull our mind away from the focus of meditation. Yet we must understand that the meditation has itself evoked the rise of these negative elements. Jesus said that the time had come when "the dead" would hear His voice and come forth to either salvation or condemnation (John 5:25, 28, 29). (Again, we should note that Jesus did not make this

a future event to occur at the end of the world.) This is fulfilled in the mind of the meditating Christian. The light of Christ shines into the darkness of our ignorance and summons forth all that dwell therein. They stand before the throne of judgment, their nature is clearly revealed, and they are dismissed—either to become a permanent part of our spiritual makeup or to be reduced to their basic constituent of primal consciousness and absorbed into the subtle power levels of our being, particularly that of the will. In other words, our inner citizens shall either be made immortal or “destroyed” (dissolved) through transmutation. The experiencing of this is not thrilling or something to write books about. Rather, it is tedious, disgusting, annoying, and even—if we permit it—discouraging.

### **Drilling through the layers**

It is not uncommon for meditators to complain about negative traits arising in their mind which they believed were already eliminated. It should be understood that the meditator is like a geologist boring through strata laid down through millions, even billions, of incarnations. Let us say we have been greedy to an extreme degree in a dozen past lives—not continuously, but with other lives in between in which we were not greedy. We may be forced to face the greed demon for quite a few meditations to eliminate it from the impressions produced in our most recent life. We may then spend weeks, months, or even years, moving through the debris of prior lives, only to one day find the greed imp facing us again, just as before. Although it is the same negative trait arising, it is in one sense not the same. That is, it is the greed germ of a life farther back. It will in time disappear, and then once more reappear when we get into the layer of another past life in which we were obsessively greedy. It is good to know this, so we will not mistakenly think that we are simply cycling the same negative impulses over and over, and not really getting anywhere. We are actually making great progress when this occurs. As can be imagined, this process may take a long time to get through. It is possible to clear the debris out in one lifetime, but diligent application is needed.

### **They live again**

The most important thing in all of this, is to realize that successful meditation involves the seeming resuscitation of long-dead thoughts, desires, and habits of previous lives. Although meditation is the divine eye through which we perceive these ghosts, we are not to voluntarily seek for them nor are we to fix our attention on them and analyze them. Instead, we are to ignore them and keep on with the process of meditation. In this way we will directly experience what Saint Paul meant in saying that some men’s sins go to judgement before them, and some men’s sins follow after them (I Timothy 5:24). Those who practice the interior life find their sins judged and dealt with before the great summing up that takes place at physical death (Hebrews 9:27). Those who have no effective interior life will find their sins (negative karmas) coming after them and catching up with them at the great summation, and thereby impelling them into further earthly births.

### **Karma and meditation**

It is possible to dissolve or work out karma through meditation. The impressions which arise during meditation are not just simple memories or interior impressions; rather they are the karmic seeds from which the external factors we usually call “my karma” proceed. If these seeds are cauterized in meditation through the purifying vibrations of higher consciousness, they will not manifest whatsoever in the future. In this way meditation becomes the fulfillment of the ancient counsel: “See that your past

does not become your future.” Meditation has the power to mitigate (lessen) our karma. If our karma is to have our leg amputated, we may instead only cut it severely. Or if our karma is to break our leg, we may only suffer a painful blow to the leg instead. Meditation also speeds up our karma.

Therefore the disciple is seen to reap far more karma in a single lifetime than the non-disciple. Further, the initiate’s karma is intensified—a karmic period that would ordinarily last several months or a year may last only a few weeks or days of great intensity. This is because the disciple, being “strong in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:10), can cope with karmic forces that would utterly overwhelm the non-disciple. Although, as has been said, meditation is healing, it has been my experience that the symptoms of an illness can be greatly magnified through meditation, thus making the illness of a much shorter duration. On the other hand, I have also found that meditation can greatly alleviate physical pain and lessen the discomfort of illness. All is done according to the infinite wisdom. One thing is sure: The current of meditation unerringly bears us to our true home in the heart of God.

### **Some more**

A little more about the eyes of fire. When the currents of the two eyes merge into one they become as a sword which metaphysically pierces into the depths of anything and reveals everything about it, giving perfect intuitive knowledge of whatever the adept focuses his mind on. It also vanquishes evil in its various forms.

The hundreds of points of power (chakras) within our many bodies are primarily points of perception and are sometimes referred to in the Bible as “eyes” (Revelation 4:8). Thus, when the chakras are ablaze with spiritual light they, too, are eyes of fire, the Eyes of Christ.

All the foregoing is indicated by the few words: “His eyes were as a flame of fire”!

*And on His head were many crowns.* This is emblematic of the total power—and therefore mastery—gained through meditation. That power is able to conquer and rule every single aspect of our being—from the grossest to the most subtle. Furthermore, there is no aspect of our life which cannot be glorified by the presence of Christ through our faithful meditation. There is no activity, however slight or material, that cannot be affected by meditation. It is certainly true that much in the outer and inner cosmos is incompatible with the power and light of meditation—but it is exactly those things that should be ruthlessly eliminated from our inner and outer life spheres.

*And He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.* As with all esoteric symbology, there are many meanings—all of which are intended and correct. This is why authentic scriptures can be expounded for centuries, and yet we never exhaust their meaning. The aspect of these words that is most immediate to the disciple relates to Consciousness itself. In this place “name” is a symbol of consciousness, for in esoteric science the consciousness of the named is contained in the name. Through faithful spiritual practice, the Divine Power pours into the disciple, enlightening and enlivening every atom of his physical and subtle bodies. He is not merely touched by the Holy Spirit, he is literally *filled* with the Holy Spirit in all the levels of his being. But this is not just an infilling, marvelous as that would be, it is also a specific *attunement* to Divine Consciousness. Nor is the disciple simply aligned with Christ or made close to Christ. Rather, in every particle of his being the disciple is made into a mirror image of Christ and a perfect reflection of the Holy Spirit.

### **The divine call**

It is stated in Kabalistic writings that in the realm of the spiritual Jerusalem, within

the spiritual temple, there is a jewel engraved with the ineffable Name of God upon the golden altar of the Holy Place, and that from above this jewel there ever resounds the voice of God saying: "Return unto Me, ye sons of men." This is a perfect figurement of the disciple's state. The "jewel" of his inmost consciousness is engraved with the deifying power of the Holy Spirit, the outer Word. This outer Word is also the Supreme Name which the disciple invokes constantly, both in and out of meditation, and which he employs in various esoteric practices to effect his transformation into an *Alterus Christus*—another Christ. Now that he has the ears with which to hear, if he continues to purify himself and live in conformity with that Power which he has been given, he shall in the depths of his being ever hear the call of God: "Return unto Me."

### **Revelation**

This "writing" of the Consciousness of God upon every particle of the disciple's being is spoken of in the Book of Revelation. There Jesus tells Saint John: "To him that overcometh will I give...a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17). The white stone is the spirit consciousness shining with the undifferentiated white light of God in which the "new name" is indelibly written, as well as in the disciple's astral and causal bodies. It also particularly refers to the pineal gland—or more exactly its astral and causal counterparts. It is important to realize that when the Bible speaks of "knowing" something it means far more than a superficial intellectual cognizance. Knowing the New Name is a direct experiential knowing through total experience and perception of the object. This is possible to the him who has been given the empowerment and the knowledge of Christian initiation.

It was said in ancient India that the cobra has a jewel in its head which confers immortality, so the ignorant (exoteric) went around killing cobras and looking in their heads for the jewel that would make them immortal. Of course, they found no such thing, since the jewel in the head of the cobra is the pineal gland which has been transformed by the divine power. The cobra, with its extended hood, symbolizes the awakened occult centers in the spine and head—the extended hood representing the two lobes of the brain. I mention this to demonstrate the unity of Christian esoteric practice with the Yoga of India, as well as to demonstrate that Christianity has its roots in India and is in a sense inseparable from the Eternal Dharma (*Sanatana Dharma*) commonly known as Hinduism. Since Buddhism is also rooted in Hinduism it should be no surprise that this concept is found there, as well, where the awakened pineal gland is known as "the jewel in the lotus," the core of the "thousand petaled lotus" that is the highest psychic center in the body.

### **A vesture dipped in blood**

*And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.* This is not a very appealing description, nor are some aspects of its symbolic meaning, but those who seek for higher consciousness must ruthlessly leave behind the childish demands of the ego that everything be pleasant and "nice." Previously, and in other writings, I have cited the Hindu prayer: "Lead me from the unreal to the Real. Lead me from darkness to the Light. Lead me from death to Immortality." This is beautiful, and delineates the very essence of spiritual life. And in doing so it implies something significant: that we must pass through unreality to reach Reality, we must pass through darkness to reach the Light, and we must pass through death to attain Life. The principle is simple: We must go through (and leave behind) the bitter to attain the sweet, the sorrowful to attain the joyful, the painful to attain true ease. We must surely carry many heavy and bitter

burdens before we can take up the light burden and sweet yoke of Christ.

Blood symbolizes life; for the Bible itself speaks of “the life thereof, which is the blood” (Genesis 9:4). To have our garments dipped in blood means to have become alive in all of our body-garments, to have every atom of our being saturated with the divine light that is itself life. Those who continually plumb its depths through meditation imbue the totality of their being with this Life. It is the immersion of our complete being in this Christ life that is the true baptism which enables us to “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). By putting on the life in which Jesus Himself is clothed, we shall truly live.

### **Pressed out**

In the Holy Eucharist a primary element is the offered wine that shall become the Blood of Christ. Wine is anciently defined as “the blood of the grape,” and need not be fermented, as is commonly thought. The wine which has been pressed out of the grapes and the Blood of Christ are often equated in the Bible and in Christian mystical writings. In view of this, it is not amiss to speak of the Blood of Christ as having been pressed out—that is, having been produced from great pressure. Before we can clothe ourselves in the life (blood) of Christ, we must undergo the “pressing” of intense austerity and unmitigated self-discipline. Without this nothing results. Christ Himself underwent the “pressing” of persecution and the passion. So must we, for there is but one path to life—the path that leads through “the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalms 23:4) before it ends in the Eternal Light.

Meditation is the perfect “winepress” by means of which the blood (the consciousness) of Christ is pressed out—made objective in our consciousness.

### **Bloody warfare**

Little as we may like to think of it, the simile of vesture dipped in blood indicates spiritual—and sometimes physical—carnage. This has to be, for if there is no war there cannot possibly be a victory. The great epic of India, the Mahabharata, is a masterful picture of the present condition of ignorant humanity. Because of their own folly, the legitimate rulers of the Pandava kingdom were forced to hand over the governance of the land to the evil Kauravas for a certain period of time, after which they were to reassume their administrative control. But when the time lapsed, the Kauravas refused to relinquish their power. So war was inevitable—a war in which, although the Pandavas were victorious, nearly all the warrior-ruler caste of India was destroyed.

So it is with us: we have foolishly relinquished the “kingdom” of our bodies into the control of negativity and folly. Now we want this control back, but the mere wanting accomplishes nothing. We are going to have to fight; and in that battle most will not be merely bruised, but hacked to pieces. When the battle is over, our garments will certainly be “dipped in blood.” Spiritual life is for the slaying of evil as much as it is for the healing and restoration of the good. This Christ which we seek is not a little baby cooing in the manger. Rather, He is the fully realized adult who drives from the temple of God all that defiles or is alien to it (Matthew 21:12, 13). Homely as the saying may be, in spiritual life, as in all the other departments of life, “if you can’t take the heat, get out of the kitchen.” Perhaps more accurately we might say: If you can’t take the heat, don’t even go into the kitchen.

### **The Word of God**

*And His Name is called The Word of God.* By His Word God has created (manifested) all that exists, for the Word is the Holy Breath, the great Amen

(Revelation 3:14), that is both the Son and the Holy Spirit. Through this creative power-impulse all that “is” has come into being, continues to exist, evolves, and shall in time be dissolved back into the divine perfection. It is this Word which leads to—and is—the Silence. Although It has undergone many permutations in the projection of relative existence, It ever remains What It Is in essence. Its divine nature is never diminished at any time. Realizing this, we must make It our sole reliance. The Apostle said that through Christ he could do all things (Philippians 4:13). The Christian disciple accomplishes all things through this Divine “Word.”

### **The armies of God**

*And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses.* The dual nature of God as both Dynamic and Static has puzzled the philosophical intellects of all ages. This is because the intellect cannot possibly figure it out, and it must always remain an enigma. But those with an inward life come to experience it fully. There is God and there are His Powers, as there is the sun and there are the rays of the sun. Though in essence they are one, yet a distinction can be made. Within Christianity this has been most perfectly expounded by the mystic-theologian Saint Gregory Palamas. Saint Gregory said that God, though one, can be spoken of as divided into Essence and Energies. In Hinduism this divine duality is spoken of as Purusha and Prakriti, or as Chaitanya (consciousness) and Shakti (power). However we may or may not conceive of it, the fundamental principle is demonstrable: when the consciousness of God is invoked within us, it is accompanied by the divine powers as well, for they are inseparable from one another.

The battle for liberation of the spirit is not fought solo by the spirit against a virtually limitless number of foes in the form of karmas and samskaras—both negative and positive—as well the outer influences that go to make up “the world” of man and nature. This is the usual bleak and seemingly hopeless view. In actuality everything is from God and of God, a manifestation of divinity—and therefore of divine qualities. Anything to the contrary is an overlay of either momentary distortion or misperception. This being so, when we really begin the spiritual ascent as a movement from the depths of our being—and not as a temporary whim or an emotional-intellectual reaction to an outward-based stimulus such as suffering, confusion, discontent, fear, desire, or persuasion—we will find a great host of fellow strivers in the multiform powers of body, mind, intellect, and will. For, as Saint John tells us: “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (I John 4:4). It is God Who wages the battle of real spiritual struggle, so success is a matter of course. On the other hand, the battles instituted by ego must by their very nature fail.

When the consciousness of our spirit begins to arise in the mind it is accompanied by all the powers inherent in us—powers which are also impulses toward the divine. These rays of light, emanating from our inmost being which is an image of the Sun of Divinity, accompany the consciousness that is our inner Christ and prepare the way of the Lord (Matthew 3:3), exalting the valleys and making plain (smooth) the ways (Isaiah 40:4). It is these powers, commanded by God Himself, that annihilate all opposition however terrifying or mighty it might appear to be. For that appearance is a lie. The truth is also told us by Saint John in the first portion of the just cited verse, namely: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome” all enemies, saying with the Psalmist: “All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them” (Psalms

118:10-12).

Of us, too, it can be said as it was of Jesus: “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 21:9), accompanied by all the powers of light, “clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Revelation 19:14).

### **The Powers of God**

These divine powers must never be confused with the “natural” powers of corrupted human nature. All “good” wrought by such is either seen in time to be no good at all or to be ineffectual and ephemeral in nature. This is why so many seem to progress and then regress, to rise high and fall low. The seeming progress and ascent were effects of natural powers which ultimately cannot avail. Which is why Jesus told the disciples: “Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). That is, without the power of spirit nothing can be accomplished of any real—that is, lasting—character. This is why, for example, religions of true wisdom never try to convert through enticement or persuasion. They know that any adoption of religious thought or action that does not spring from the inmost consciousness of the pure self or spirit can only go awry or collapse. This latter is really more desirable, for twisted religion can devastate minds and lives through long centuries, becoming increasingly destructive and binding. Most religion at the present time is the expression of pathological conditions of body, mind, and emotion. This is the virulent fruit of missionarying.

In the matter of interior life it is particularly essential that all endeavor is motivated from the inmost consciousness of the seeker. Otherwise failure, and perhaps harm, is the inevitable result. For this reason aspirants should scrupulously examine the nature of their spiritual interest and see it for what it truly is. So also must a legitimate teacher and guide determine the source of the inquirer’s pursuit, and refuse to accommodate egoism or whimsy in any degree. The “will remodel to suit tenant” attitude of many teachers reveals their own incompetence and dishonesty.

How, then, can we ensure that it is the divine powers which are being evoked in us and not the ephemeral shades of “nature”? By the nature of our practice itself. It must be based from beginning to end on the invocation of the Divine Consciousness, the only commander around which the divine forces rally to do battle under His aegis. As already stated, this is the guarantor of success.

### **Fine**

*And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.* The description of the clothing of these interior warriors gives us information by which we can further ensure that the forces manifesting from within us are spiritually legitimate. For they do not wear the expected costume of war—armor, helmets, and such like—but “fine linen, white and clean.” This listing of qualities is most informative, for it also reveals the character of true spiritual aspirants and the practices they employ to win the battle. We will find an examination of these aspects beneficial.

By the word “fine” is meant the opposite of coarseness and heaviness. Refinement and subtlety are also implied. Fine linen would be cloth woven of very light, thin threads in contrast to heavy cloth woven of thick, heavy threads. It is the difference between the finest and softest fabric and the coarsest burlap, for example.

The inner spiritual powers, then, are subtle, refined, and light. So also are their effects. These powers are not cataclysmic in nature, producing extreme, violent, or even readily perceived changes or effects. This is important to know, because presently it is considered desirable that spiritual practice should result in shakes, quakes, thrills, chills, sights, lights and other such gross phenomena that read well in a



“how I got enlightened” book for popular consumption. But as the Master Yogananda often reminded his students, “the path to the Divine is not a circus.” In truth such phenomena as just described are fundamentally pathological in nature, and those who undergo them are ultimately seen to be worsened rather than bettered—all effusive testimonial and insistence to the contrary. Here are two examples from life, both connected with each other.

One of Yogananda’s disciples, Brahmacharini Forest, told me that she and many others were puzzled at the great difference they experienced when blessed by Yogananda and his most advanced male disciple, James Lynn (Rajasi Janakananda). “When Rajasi blessed us, it nearly blew the tops of our heads off,” she said. “Sometimes people almost fell over backwards. But when Master blessed us we did not feel anything at all.” This was often discussed by the various disciples, but they could not arrive at any conclusion. So Forest went to Sister Meera, one of the senior monastics, and asked her about the matter. “Sister Meera explained to me that Rajasi had a great deal of power, but did not know how to direct it. So he just threw it at us and literally bowled us over. Master, on the other hand, had perfect control, and when he blessed us he directed the currents deep into our physical and astral bodies, cleansing us from karmas and our negative subconscious habit patterns. We did not feel anything, because everything moved in the astral channels as they should without any resistance, and we were benefited by it.”

This was my experience in relation to two of Yogananda’s advanced disciples. When one touched me on the forehead I would feel tremendous spiritual force entering the “third eye” and flowing through the brain and spine. It was not violent, but it was very dramatic. In contrast, when one of Yogananda’s seniormost disciples touched me in blessing I would feel nothing whatsoever. But in a few minutes, as I sat quietly, I would experience an indescribable elevation of consciousness and a deep, lasting inner awakening. It was when I referred to this in a conversation with Brahmacharini Forest that she told me her experience and Sister Meera’s clarification.

It is the refined, subtle energies that are able to work lasting changes in our awareness. The more evolved consciousness or energy becomes, the more refined and subtle it becomes. Thus it is the highest level of spiritual powers alone that are able to conquer all opposition to our ascent to perfection. It is not the obvious energies of the objective levels of our being—including emotion or intellect—that can aid us in the struggle, for they are of mixed character: partly polarized to the lower, downward-pulling orientation of matter, and partly polarized to the higher, upward-tending pull of the spirit. By their very nature they create conflict in us, which is why responsible spiritual teachers emphasize the need for continual purification of the aspirant on all levels. For if the aspirant does not rise above these lower levels his spiritual life will continually swing like a pendulum between the opposites of higher and lower—outward and inner—consciousness. The seeker must disentangle himself from such constant cycling, otherwise his life will be a frustrating series of ups and down, risings and fallings “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isaiah 57:20). For this reason we must continually strive to purify and refine our entire makeup, outer and inner, to ensure our success and stability in spiritual life.

Only the refined aspirant can succeed, and his spiritual practice must correspondingly be of the highest character—not just the obvious and outer ways of exoteric religion, though they, too, are needed to maintain his pursuit. It is the subtle interior practices of yoga and meditation that are the foundation of his spiritual attainment.

## **Linen**

In the Egyptian and Hebrew religions linen was the distinctive clothing of priests. This was carried over into Christianity until vanity dictated the wearing of showy vestments. Linen, however, remained the prescribed cloth for use on the altar. Linen, then, is emblematic of the essentially religious, even priestly, character of those interior powers that grant victory to the aspiring soul. These are not the powers that are native to every human being. Rather, they are the powers infused into the disciple, and upon which he continually draws. Here, too, the aspirant and his spiritual practice must be of the same nature.

## **White**

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5), therefore white has universally been a symbol of the divine light—of the active presence of God “Who coverest himself with light as with a garment” (Psalms 104:2). This adjective conveys the idea that it is God Himself, manifesting as inner spiritual power, that works our inner transformation (Romans 12:2), enabling us to say that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). Only the awakened disciple can declare with the knowledge derived from experience that “in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Here, as in the commentary on Aphorism Four, we find the principle that our spiritual search must be a manifestation of the divine nature in us: our spirit. That which arises from any other aspect of our being cannot end in higher consciousness because it does not originate in consciousness at all but in the subtle materiality of our psychic and intellectual bodies. The impulses of those bodies can only lead back into them, into the realm of unconsciousness. For the only life or consciousness they have is the reflection cast upon them by the proximity of our spirit-consciousness. Spiritual life, as distinct from physical, psychic, or intellectual life, only results when “Deep calleth unto deep” (Psalms 42:7), when the individual spirit calls out for union with the Absolute Spirit.

It is spirit power that accomplishes our metamorphosis from the unreal to the Real, from the darkness to the Light, from death to Immortality. Only the spirit truly aspires to Spirit. And the means of metamorphosis, the methods of inner alchemy, must be exclusively spiritual in nature. This is particularly crucial for the spiritual pilgrim, since most “spiritual practices” are really physical, psychic, or intellectual in nature and, like their impulses, can only lead back to them, however flashy or impressive they may be. In the end their practicers find themselves right where they started, however entertaining the experiences produced by them. Beginning in delusion, limitation, and bondage, they end there—for actually they never really “took” the practicers anywhere. This is a horrible realization, and even more horrible when unrealized. Years, lifetimes even, are frittered away by such methods that are very much like the revolving mirrored spheres seen on dance floors. They have no light of their own, distort what they reflect, and ultimately go dark. Then, “if the light that is in thee [really] be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:23).

A practice is spiritual and not illusive if it begins and ends in *consciousness*, and consciousness alone. That is, if its ultimate result is establishment in the pure consciousness that alone is the nature of our spirit—and God. Such a practice is extremely hard to find, but not impossible. We must not unquestioningly accept the claims of a practice’s promoters, but observe or experience its results and judge accordingly, since “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). One thing can be said: authentic spiritual practice does not at all lend itself to the hype and puff of the

carnival sideshow of contemporary pop religion, “spirituality,” or “yoga.”

### **Clean**

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). The Greek word *katharos* means pure, clean, and clear. In this case it means the state of being free of all alien elements (pure), obscuration (clean), or blockage (clear). That is, it must be of a purely spiritual character with no admixture of any kind, it must be undimmed by any taint of ignorance or unconsciousness, and it must be free of all obstacles or hindrances. Such must be the nature of our inner spiritual powers, otherwise they cannot lead to the state of cleanness or purity. So also must the aspirant be—or at least he must be effectively engaged in his own purification, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:3). Until his purification is complete, the final attainment is impossible. Obviously the aspirant’s inner practices cannot lead to this necessary cleanness unless the practices themselves are already pure—and purifying. “The Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight” (Psalms 18:24). “For the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:8).

### **The Sword**

*And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword....* The primal power, the initial manifestation of God Himself is “the word of his mouth” (Jeremiah 9:20). For “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The Word—in Greek: *Logos*; in Sanskrit: *Vak* or *Shabda*—is not just a projection of God, but is inherent in God, present from the very beginning. It is virtually the prime faculty, or power, of God; yet It really *is* God. God, though absolutely one, is yet dual, both Silence and Sound, both Speaker and Spoken. All that exists is an expansion-manifestation of God. “And God said,…” (Genesis 1:3), and all things came to be. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psalms 33:6). It is essential to realize that in the Bible “the Word” often means the creative Will or intention of God.

This primordial Word is called “the sword of the Spirit” by Saint Paul (Ephesians 6:17). Out of the mouth of the divine spark that is our spirit—and out of the mouth of him who has been put in touch with his spirit by spiritual wakening—emanates the sharp sword of the Word. This is *the* conquering weapon in all spiritual warfare. For this reason the great disciple, Isaiah, declared that God “hath made my mouth like a sharp sword” (Isaiah 49:2). Here mouth and word are the same thing. The Will-Word of God is described by the apostle as “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

### **The purpose of the Sword**

*...that with it he should smite the nations,* is the purpose of the sword. With it he should bring into subjection the unruly and distorted elements of our own natures. Most of our inner rebels can be conquered and restored to their true purpose—the attainment of divine perfection. But some elements such as ignorance and illusion must be annihilated, so a few verses later he says that “the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth.” Again we remember the words of David: “All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me

about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.”

As for those parts of our nature which can be healed and restored: *he shall rule them with a rod of iron*—the illumined and empowered will of both God and the disciple working together. (“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” II Corinthians 6:1. “Work out your own salvation” Philippians 2:12.)

### **The wrath of God**

*And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.* Oh, my! how little we like pictures such as this. Nonetheless, they are true and should be understood by us. Within us—for we are treaders of the winepress along with the divine power—there is a necessary power for the subduing and vanquishing of ignorance and evil. And to be successful that power must be fierce, opposing, and ruthless—not in the egoic sense of hatred, anger, or enmity, but in the sense of determined elimination-annihilation. Being directed toward “things” it is, however, objective and thus a bringer of peace. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them” (Romans 1:18, 19). The “wrath of God” is directed at the evil of men, but not at men. And since it comes “from heaven” it is the descent of Divine Consciousness whose purpose is to make known to men, and make manifest in them, that part of them that is one with God: their spirit. Through this “wrath” God clears from their vision all that obstructs it, and shows them both His and their reality. This is love and mercy. But not for the fantasies of sin and evil. Upon them comes the purifying “wrath” of God. So the Divine Consciousness is the Destroyer of delusion and ignorance, but the Healer of our goodness. It is both wrath and mercy.

“And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:19). This earth is our lower nature, and the vine of the earth is that which binds us to it. The Power of God, the Holy Spirit, within us presses out the winepress and cauterizes the seeds of the vine of evil, setting us free from future bondage. It never fails—nor does he who never ceases to foster that inner grace.

The book of Revelation gives a stunning—though sometimes incomprehensible—symbolic picture of the liberating workings of the “wrath” of God with us. All that is portrayed there is the action of the Divine Life within us. Wherefore: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Hebrews 12:5)—for it is not you who are being rebuked or rejected, but that with which you wrongly identify.

Whenever a negative thing arises within or without to hinder or harm us, it is the promise of God that when petitioned by us, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Revelation 2:16).

### **The victor’s reward**

*And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.* To the ancients the thigh was the center of strength, and oaths—especially of loyalty and service—made to a king were often sealed by kissing his thigh or knee. This action is retained by the Eastern (Byzantine) Orthodox Church in the rite of ordination to the priesthood where the ordinand kneels and kisses the vestment-clad thigh or

knee of the ordaining bishop.

The presence of God within us, the Holy Spirit is ultimately revealed as being Itself the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Ruler of the ruled, the Power of the powerful, the Life of the living. And he who overcomes, who wins the spiritual battle, becomes himself King of Kings and Lord of Lords by participating in the Divine State. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Revelation 2:17), the New Name being the evidence that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

Further: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God” (Revelation 3:12). “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21). “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Revelation 21:7).

### **Reorientation**

No one likes war—inner or outer; but for the aspirant to higher consciousness it is an absolute necessity. Without the struggle into the light, the seed will die; without the struggle to break open the egg and emerge, the chick will die; without the trauma of birth the infant in the womb will die. We fear a fight lest we be injured or killed, but unless we engage in the inner war, pain and death are inevitable. As in all other aspects, our outer life often renders us unfit for the inner life, since we assume the same rules apply and the experiences will be the same. But without the inner fight there is no inner fulfillment. The Master wants us to understand this well.

### **The dull void**

The Prodigal Son wasted his inheritance, “and when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him” (Luke 15:14-16).

The prodigal is the spirit that has left its home in God and entered in the alien country of relative existence. In that barren place it loses all knowledge of itself and God. By continual rebirth it goes into the fields of the swine—into the bodies dominated by the senses. There it feeds those senses with the husks of material experience. How it yearns to satisfy itself deep inner hunger with those same husks. But they are food for the material senses alone, and cannot touch, much less satisfy, the questing spirit. “No man gave unto him.” That is, nothing of “man,” of humanity and its “nature” can feed the spirit. And so the wandering soul drifts on, impelled by “the dull void within”—but always in the wrong direction.

Educated in the school of this world, we fear pain. The struggle to avoid want and suffering is considered “the pursuit of happiness.” And it is that struggle which robs us of “life” and “liberty” as well. How alienated we find ourselves from those “inalienable rights”! Occasionally we encounter the distraction or excitement of real suffering. But mostly we plod on, absorbed in the ache of that “dull void within.” Zombielike, we feed the pigs and starve our souls, living the common life of “quiet desperation.” But when we turn back into ourselves and send out the inner call, the divine spark, fanned by our

earnest cry, bursts into living fire, fights, and thereby fills that void with the inner light, the *Fos Ilaron*, the joy-bearing light of our inner Christ (*Fos Ilaron* is the title of an ancient hymn to Christ sung at sunset). Nothing else can fill that void and bring peace to the spirit.

### **The dullness**

The expression “dull void” conveys to us the truth about this world and its life: dreariness is its primary character. However raucous and gaudy, however frantic and explosive it may be, “after the ball is over” and the silence of the devastated heart alone remains, only weariness and hopelessness reigns. Dull of eye and soul we sink to earth and wallow in momentary oblivion, only to awaken to the whips and shouts of “the good life,” struggle up, and again stagger on in “the pursuit of happiness,” leaving any hope of real life and liberty behind us undetected. How worn out we are. Therefore Saint Paul refers to “the old man” of earth (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9). “The dullness of the tea-time of life” persists. Rare are those who rally enough to grieve that “I have measured out my life in coffee spoons.” Rarer, still, are those who come to themselves like the Prodigal, turn from earthly nothingness, and say: “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18). To them alone will come the joy-giving words: “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine” (Luke 15:31).

### **The inner void**

This dull aching void is within—not without—and it is a grave error to attribute our dis-ease to any outer factor whatsoever or to suppose that any outer thing whatsoever can remove it. Those who frantically pursue pleasure or fulfillment outside themselves only compound their misery, even if momentarily they seem to gain what they desire. From life to life we assume that the void is outside us and seek to fill it by obtaining a myriad “things,” only to be disappointed and impelled to run after the next object we mistakenly believe will satisfy us and remove our discontent.

It is especially crucial that we do not fall into the supposition that our problem is not an inner void, but some kind of inner state or entity that only needs to be removed, healed, or soothed—that nothing more is needed than the removal or anesthetizing of the pain. But our problem is an *absence*, a lack, a painful emptiness rather than an undesired or undesirable presence or condition. Therefore it must be filled.

Unfortunately, although we cannot fill that inner void with outward things, we can attempt to cram into our hearts all sorts of distractions and mental toys—not to speak of outright self-deceptions, and even illusions imposed upon us by others. Never do these things really fill us or dispel the pain, but we make ourselves think that, like medicine, they only need some time to work their cure. That, too, never occurs, and we keep running in the inner maze, grasping at anything in our mental reach and attempting to plug up the inner vacuum that gnaws at us perpetually. Only the spirit, by its advent—which is gained only by great warfare—can work the cure and truly fill the dull void within.

### **Another parable**

Many fantasy or fairy stories from ancient times are really spiritual parables. Originally they were part of the inner tradition of the religions that were displaced by Christianity. Their theology was forgotten but the stories, since they drew upon subconscious roots that are common to all, remained fascinating to all generations.

Sleeping Beauty is one such sacred myth. The spirit, asleep under the evil spell of ignorance, lies within the castle of the body as if dead. Impenetrable brambles encircle

the castle, squeezing it like a malevolent serpent. Such are the negative forces we call karma that spring from our sins of past and present. Only with agonizing battle can the evil guardian of evil be slain, the brambles cut through, and the princess be awakened to life. Tremendous is the war that the divine warrior must fight to enter the dull void of our heart and fill it with his Light. We must acknowledge this and prepare ourselves accordingly.

*And if this is so, then canst thou go through the fight cool and unwearied....* Yes, there will be a fight. But we shall even then be at peace if we let the warrior work his will in us. There are two stories illustrative of this.

A devotee of Sri Ramakrishna told of having a dream in which he saw a man walking easily and rapidly across the water of a vast sea. "How are you able to do that?" he called from the shore. Not looking back, the man replied: "It is easy. There is a bridge just beneath the surface of the water." "Wait for me, then," the dreamer called out. "No; I cannot wait. You come along in your own time," answered the man as we kept on walking. When Sri Ramakrishna heard this, He was profoundly thrilled and urged the man to take up spiritual practice immediately.

We think that leading a spiritual life of sufficient intensity to make a difference will be difficult and even painful. But we are wrong. God has already made the way, and according to Jesus it is easy. ("My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" Matthew 11:30. Our problem is that we have a wrong understanding of just about everything to do with the higher life, and naturally it becomes a struggle and a frustration for us. But once we find the "bridge" all is easy. And where is that bridge? Within, just beneath the surface appearance of things. For the truth is, the entire universe, which is a net in which the ignorant are hopelessly caught, is also the way out to liberation. We just have to gain the inner viewpoint. And this is done through meditation—no other way.

In her book *The Scent of Water* Elizabeth Goudge tells of a thief who reformed and became a hermit. As part of his penance he built a beautiful chapel, and at the back carved a self-portrait in which he was crowned with thorns. But those who looked closely saw that there was a gap between the thorns and the head of the carving; and when they put their finger behind the carved thorns they could feel that the monk was really crowned with roses! And so it is. When "we" try to lead the life of the spirit it is an awful struggle that is doomed to fail. But when we let our spirit—and therefore God—begin to unfold the divine life it is easy and inevitable. Just as you cannot eat with your elbow, you cannot lead the life of the spirit with anything but the spirit; and the spirit is able to utilize all the lesser elements of our being as tools for success. We need never doubt or fear: it is our destiny to manifest divinity.

### **Stand aside**

And how do we let the spirit move within us? By...*standing aside and letting him battle for thee*. This entire cosmos is an evolutionary device that moves inexorably toward the revelation of God in all. "For the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:19, 21, 22). It is a much greater struggle than that of the body in childbearing, and it is painful in the superficial levels, but the result is "the glorious liberty of the children of God," which makes it all worthwhile and relatively easy. Inner divinity must be released. Just as Jesus in the tomb was wound around and around with linen bands stuck together in layers by more than one hundred pounds of gummy resins, so we are entangled and stuck up in the labyrinth of our earthly

existence—which includes all our previous incarnations, as well. Our spirits are like helpless mummies, lying in the tomb of the body and its material life. But, like Christ, they can pass through the bonds and the goo and be free. It is all a matter of letting the spirit live, of letting it breathe its source, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Breath of God.

*Then it will be impossible for thee to strike one blow amiss.* How truly incredible—and how incredibly true. For some reason, perhaps because of the trauma of the mental botch called modern education and the spiritual botch that is “popular” Christianity, we seem very afraid of making a mistake and either being laughed at and considered stupid or being condemned to eternal roasting. It has amazed me through the years how reluctant nearly everyone is to answer questions put to them about what they perceive to be the truth. I cannot count the number of times I have had to assure students that there is no wrong answer, that my intention is to learn how they view something. No pronouncement of right or wrong is going to be made on it. Contradictorily, people rush ahead and never give a thought to the wisdom or rightness of speech and action. How hard we work at tripping ourselves up where there really is no tangle at all.

Those who begin consciously looking after their spiritual development are particularly prone to fear making a mistake, or taking a wrong turn, or wasting effort. But what else has been going on for lifetimes beyond number? So a few more false starts will not destroy us. The time comes when we have to quit shivering and shaking with fear of being wrong and just plunge in and find out by the result. The cosmos is a great laboratory of spiritual experimentation, in which many mistakes will be made and quite a few explosions (some quite stinky) will occur. But so what? Better to be a spiritual scientist with smudges and smells on our white coat than to be locked in a straitjacket of fear and doubt. Go ahead and try! That should be our motto.

### **Mahafoolishity**

One of Swami Sivananda’s created expressions was “mahafoolishity”—the condition of being maximally foolish. One of the dumbest things (and people) I ever saw was in Ranchi, Bihar (India), at the Anandamayi Ashram homeopathic dispensary run by my dear friend Dr. Mukherji. An old man came in who had married a girl about a third his age. He was carrying the product of the marriage, a fat little boy with the mental development of a brussels sprout. (I really wanted to get a look at the mother.) Dr. Mukherji had prescribed a remedy for the child bride, who was “too nervous” to come see him for herself. (I was getting the idea.) When he asked how the medicine was working, the old man said in a voice like a hoot owl: “She has not taken that remedy.” “Why not?” inquired the doctor, quite surprised. “Because she thinks she remembers somebody once told her that remedy was *hot*. And she cannot stand *hot* things.” “No, no, it is not hot in the least,” protested the doctor. “She should take it and benefit.” “But she is afraid it might be *hot*,” hooted the aged spouse. “So she will not take it. She wants you to give something else.” Dr. Mukherji was kindly exasperated. “But that is the only medication for her problem. She must take it.” “No, she is afraid it might be *hot*.” Now this ring-around-the-rosy went on and on, with “She is afraid it might be *hot*” recurring as the tiresome refrain. Finally the hooter picked up the chubby sprout and left. Dr. Mukherji turned to me...and his look said it all. Then he turned back and began to laugh. A wise response to the whole thing. In spiritual life we cannot be afraid that it might be “hot.” Heaven and hell should both be disregarded—we must move *on*. Then we will not fail, ever.

*But if thou look not for him, if thou pass him by, then there is no safeguard for thee.* Absolutely! If we look not within (for “he” is nowhere else), but pass him by as we rush



down the highways and byways of “life,” not only will there be no safeguard for us, there is the absolute assurance of a collision and crack-up, just like in a few hundred or thousand past lives. As a consequence:

*Thy brain will reel, thy heart grow uncertain, and in the dust of the battlefield thy sight and senses will fail,....* Confusion, doubt, and imperception are the only possible outcome of turning from or ignoring the inner light of the spirit.

*...and thou wilt not know thy friends from thy enemies.* This is the worst of the consequences that follow from rejecting or losing sight of spiritual realities. We become truly negative: everything is seen as opposite to what they really are, just as in a photographic negative the dark is light and the light is dark. Seeking to help ourselves, we can only come to harm, for we inevitably do that which compounds our trouble or adds some new dimension to it. (Any general textbook on psychology will reveal the truth of this.) In this state, a search for truth or God is inevitably perilous. This is why most religion and religionists are so harmful. The fault does not lie with religion itself or with the pursuit of spiritual life, but rather with those who are engaged in it. As Jesus pointed out, when the blind lead the blind they all fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14). “Living in the abyss of ignorance yet wise in their own conceit, deluded fools go round and round, the blind led by the blind” (Katha Upanishad 1:2:5; Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.8).

### **Spiritual vision**

Without spiritual vision any spiritual endeavor is hopeless, and usually turns out to not be spiritual at all, but physical, emotional, or fantasy. This is why it is harmful to go around trying to force people into spiritual life or perspective. At best hypocrisy will result, and at worst spiritual harm for themselves and others will occur. Most religion runs on the fuel of vicious or stupid ignorance. (Yes, there is benevolent and intelligent ignorance. It leads nowhere, but it does not lead to harm.) This is why a true religion simply makes itself available, but never seeks to convert or convince—conversion and conviction must arise from the spontaneous spiritual awakening that comes to all of us in time. God has eternity—and so do we—in which this can happen. There is no need for anxiety regarding others. The same illumination that has come forth in us is in them and shall shine forth when it should—not one moment more or less. It is all inward, and no outer force can effect that awakening. Nor can it prevent it.

For this reason we must be extremely careful of that or those which are supposedly spiritual, for they usually are just the opposite. Not being truly of the spirit they become physically and mentally coercive, abusive, and delusive. To those who are just beginning to wake up inwardly and stir to effective spiritual life, they can be extremely confusing and even destructive. To those who have become stabilized in their interior awakening they are only a pathetic joke, but it is not good to take chances with them. Caution is wisdom in relation to them—always. I am not counseling you to fear them, but to be wary of them. On your own you will discover that they are a waste of time at best. That is why Jesus advised us: “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14).

In the same way, be careful about speaking of spiritual matters to those who may be unready for it or even (consciously or subconsciously) opposed to things of the spirit. Do not judge by appearances or take anyone’s words at face value—especially the enthusiastic and emotional “glowies” who seem to radiate love, peace, and light. This is usually a cover for just the opposite, or a self-delusion. So be careful, cautious, and tread very warily and softly in introducing spiritual subjects. Try to gauge just how real their spiritual awareness is, and to what degree they are awake. Just as you do not

discuss with a preschooler the ins and outs of the stock market or physics or higher mathematics, so do not burden them with what they are not capable of grasping. Pay no attention to their opinion of themselves or their aspiration. You must apply wisdom here and usually remain safely silent. Your ego may want to shine and strut in spiritual talk—but let that be a warning to you that not a word should be said lest you harm yourself. Many times I have seen genuinely spiritual people dismissed by the shallow as ignorant and unspiritual because they kept quiet when they should. This happened to me one time in India when I visited a yogi that lived on an island in the Ganges. Because I would not chatter on or ply him with “profound” questions, but simply sat and listened to him and three others play religious ring-around-the-rosy with words, he became very dissatisfied with me and hinted that I need not return to see him again.

### **Don't waste your time**

Do not believe that you can help the ignorant and immature. Neither can you save them from harm if in their ignorance and immaturity they are blithely (and happily and self-satisfiedly) going in the wrong direction—even perhaps to harm and pain. This is their choice: “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone” (Hosea 4:17). Now you know why “God lets us suffer.” We have *chosen* it. That is what free will is all about. Some people need to burn themselves to learn to avoid fire. Ego-based interference is not compassion. Keep your hands to yourself. God does; and He is wiser than you.

If we cannot tell our friends from our enemies, what shall we do? Look within, become established in the inner vision, and let our immortal spirit lead us from the unreal to the real, from darkness to the light, from death to immortality. Do not sit around waiting for God to do the calling and the leading. Wake up, stand up, and get moving.

Shake off childish conceptions and misperceptions about God and hearken to the truth the Master now says to you: *He is thyself, yet thou art but finite and liable to error. He is eternal and is sure. He is eternal truth.* These are truly the words of life (John 6:68; Acts 5:20). God is our own Self. He is eternal; we are eternal. He has never not existed, nor shall He ever cease to exist; and it is the same with us. We and God have existed co-eternally. There has never been separation between us to any degree whatsoever. He knows that; we do not. We have lost that awareness, He has not. And we can regain it in Him, for He is the root of our root, the Spirit of our spirit. He is the Whole and we are the parts—but nonetheless eternally divine. We are *one*, but we are not *the same*. He is infinite and not subject to error; we are finite and susceptible to error. We are eternal, as is He, but at present we are *unsure*, subject to coming and going, birth and death, rising and falling—and a host of contradicting dualities. And this confusion will persist as long as we look to our finitude. But if we turn to Infinity, to God Who is eternal Truth, then the confusion will fade away, be seen as merely a mirage, and we, too, will become stable and Real.

We have come to believe that eternity is merely time without end and that truth is a conglomerate of the right or correct ideas. Consequently we never even touch either eternity or truth. But the Master now lets us know that eternity and truth are God Himself. We cannot enter eternity (the revivalist question: “Where will you spend eternity?” being particularly erroneous) or find truth. Rather we can wake up in God—where we have always been—in eternity, in truth. “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalms 17:15). At the moment we think we are “lost” or “strayed” from God, but that is an illusion. “When I awake, I am still with thee” (Psalms 139:18). Fear and doubt are ended forever, for:

## **Assured future**

*When once he has entered thee and become thy warrior, he will never utterly desert thee, and at the day of the great peace he will become one with thee.* We are always one with God, as the Master has assured us, but we do not know that. Actually we forget it utterly. But in time, through cultivation of inner consciousness, we begin to experience that unity to a slight degree, and it increases in us much as does the light of day—in stages. Then the full light comes in “the day of the great peace” when everything but God ceases to exist in our perception. This is set forth in the Old Testament (II Kings 5:1-14) in the healing of Naaman the leper. Naaman was a captain of the Syrian army who came to Elisha the prophet (who would later be born as Jesus of Nazareth), asking for healing. Elisha told him to dip seven times in the Jordan river (where he himself would be baptized by his master Elijah, returned as John the Baptist). He did so and was cured. Why seven times instead of just once? Because we are restored in degrees. Also, this symbolizes the seven levels of consciousness—corresponding to the seven chakras of Yoga—through which we must pass to attain the perfect Consciousness of the Unconditioned Absolute that is symbolized in the New Testament as the “eighth day” of Resurrection.

The same idea is presented in the Gospel of Mark: “And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly” (Mark 8:22-25). Spiritual sight comes in steps as exact as the ascent of a ladder. One by one, and each following the other in precise order. This is not a haphazard ascent, and has nothing to do with the vague muddle of popular religious thought or devotion. It is a methodology of the spirit and has nothing to do with either the ideas of the seeker or the whims of a conditioned deity. It is the only real science there is, for it alone results in Knowledge and Truth: God.

**5. Listen to the song of life.**

**6. Store in your memory the melody you hear.**

**7. Learn from it the lesson of harmony.**

Though spiritual life is largely based on the cultivation of intuition, some things are required of the intellect: be objective; note and remember; reflect and learn. Then apply what has been learned in the manner that will achieve harmony. It cannot be denied that a great deal of people learn from life how to exploit it, distort it, or turn it to misery for others and often for themselves. All knowledge is a two-edged sword that cuts both ways. So it is imperative for us to use it skillfully, as Buddha pointed out.

Life itself teaches us how to live. When you have learned the lesson:

**8. You can stand upright now, firm as a rock amid the turmoil, obeying the warrior who is thyself and thy king. Unconcerned in the battle save to do his bidding, having no longer any care as to the result of the battle, for one thing only is important, that the warrior shall win, and you know he is incapable of defeat—standing thus, cool and awakened, use the hearing you have acquired by pain and by the destruction of pain. Only fragments of the great song come to your ears while yet you are but man. But if you listen to it, remember it faithfully, so that none which has reached you is lost, and endeavor to learn**

**from it the meaning of the mystery which surrounds you. In time you will need no teacher. For as the individual has voice, so has that in which the individual exists. Life itself has speech and is never silent. And its utterance is not, as you that are deaf may suppose, a cry: it is a song. Learn from it that you are part of the harmony; learn from it to obey the laws of the harmony.**

We can see right away that this is a list of characteristics we will have—not what we will have to still attain—once we have met our true Self and known Him to be both us and God.

*Unconcerned in the battle save to do his bidding, having no longer any care as to the result of the battle, for one thing only is important, that the warrior shall win, and you know he is incapable of defeat—....*

A lot of silly philosophizing has gone on, especially in India, about being unconcerned or disinterested in relation to the results of our endeavors. Not caring what happens would render us actionless. The only reason we do something is the need for a result. Oh, yes, frequently we say: “Well, we have to *do* something,” but it never stops just there. Then we set our mind to it and figure out what course of action will get the desired result. Who would administer medicine without the hope that a cure would be effected; or do something constructive without the desire to help? Certainly, in some irreparable situations people act without any hope of a positive result, but even that act has a desire behind it: the desire to make a statement of principle, to “stand up and be counted” even if all is lost. Motiveless action is absurd for a human being. Even when a person does something for God, with no other motivation, he does so with the desire that he will be doing the right thing and expressing his devotion for God. It is this latter that is partly implied by this clause—there are times when obeying God is sufficient for us, whether “good” comes of it or not. But there is another aspect that I feel, considering all that has gone before, is uppermost in the Master’s mind: that we will be unconcerned in the battle because we know victory is assured. So we can take our eyes off the result and keep them on God alone.

*...standing thus, cool and awakened,....* What a beautiful picture is presented to us: a warrior cool amidst the heat of battle because he is *awakened*—awakened to the truth that it is all a dream, a dream of God, but nonetheless a dream from which we can all awaken into fearlessness. In one sense we will not win the battle, we will awaken from it. What joy, what freedom, what release! Yet we will still be in the dream, though awake in a state that transcends it. Jesus had this in mind when at the end of His life He prayed for His disciples, saying: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:15, 16). We are no more “of the dream” than is God, the Dreamer, yet, like Him, we are to remain involved in it until perfection in dreaming is achieved.

*...use the hearing you have acquired by pain and by the destruction of pain.* “Ears to hear” (Matthew 11:15, 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23, 7:16; Luke 8:8, 14:35) are not easy to come by; they are trophies won only after long and arduous battle.

The Master shows that we have to undergo two forms of involvement with pain: we must incur pain by struggle and eliminate pain by struggle. The first comes before wisdom begins its rise in us, and the second follows that arising “as does night the day.” But pain is the gateway to hearing in the spirit. We are usually nettled by all the exoteric Christian talk about the cross and the way of the cross, but no matter how little the speakers may understand their words, they are the truth and must become both our experience and our wisdom.

## Living up to our potential

*Only fragments of the great song come to your ears while yet you are but man. But if you listen to it, remember it faithfully, so that none which has reached you is lost, and endeavor to learn from it the meaning of the mystery which surrounds you.* How sublime this all is, how thoroughly true. And how brilliantly the Master illumines the way and guides us around all pitfalls.

It is true that those in the human condition cannot perceive the entire song of life; but that does not mean that we should wait until we hear the whole melody before learning from it and gaining understanding from it. Rather, if we retain and use that which comes to us, however fragmentary it may be, that itself will begin to transform us and move us onward to the complete message. The Master is also showing us that simply being in awe of creation or of the vastness of spirit is worthless; and so is just looking at everything in reverence as a mystery. No. It all has meaning and its script must be deciphered. And the more we comprehend the more we will learn. God did not spread forth the cosmos to impress us or to merely indicate that He exists. It has a purpose, and that purpose is *learning*. Wandering the cosmos from life to life like a tourist, just looking and admiring, is not our purpose, nor is attributing it all to God or praising Him for it mean anything. We have to study it and learn. Creation is a preparatory school for divinity.

*In time you will need no teacher. For as the individual has voice, so has that in which the individual exists.* The ego of human beings paints them into two corners: false independence and false dependence. When we still need to learn from outer sources, especially other human beings, the ego screams that we need no teacher, that we are sufficient of ourselves to learn and understand. The book *The Impersonal Life* especially fuels this fire and brings many to self-destruction—I have seen it myself more than once. The fact that such a mental and moral ruin as Elvis Presley loved the book and gave away many copies to friends and acquaintances demonstrates its invalidity. On the other hand, once we do start coming into our own in spiritual growth, and we need to start developing the capacity for analyzing and learning on our own and gaining the self-reliance ultimately needed in the spiritual battle, our ego either belittles us and badgers us into thinking that we are stupid and incompetent, or it gets very religious and starts babbling about “making God our all” and realizing that God is the only power in the universe, that we must realize we are His children and that He does all for us that is needful; that “surrender” and “trust” and “relying on God alone” are the marks of love and faith. “Let go and let God” becomes the motto. Having been raised on this sentimental treacle, it was a revelation and a relief when I read in the Gita the words of Krishna: “O Arjuna, stand up and fight!” (Bhagavad Gita 2:37).

So, “in the fullness of time” we must stand on our own. Not that we reject the past teachings we have received, but that having learned the theory it is now time to move on to demonstration in our own life. This, too, is one of the lessons God has intended for us. At the same time we realize that it is indeed His power alone that does all things, that it is His wisdom alone that can shine forth in us; but it is His will that we reach out and wield that power and wisdom He is making so freely accessible to us. When we do this we realize that God truly is acting and ascending through us. That it is our willingness that must be put forth on our part. God, in Whom we as individuals exist, begins to speak to us from within rather than from without, and becomes our teacher, but not until we develop the self-reliance that mirrors His own self-sufficiency.

*Life itself has speech and is never silent. And its utterance is not, as you that are deaf may suppose, a cry: it is a song.* This is somewhat of a recapitulation to drive the point

home. Life is not chaotic or happenstance: it is pattern and purpose. An illiterate person sees writing as meaningless scratches, but the literate find a message. *Learn from it that you are part of the harmony; learn from it to obey the laws of the harmony.*

**9. Regard earnestly all the life that surrounds you.**

Life that surrounds us is as much an extension of us as it is an extension of God's Being. Contrary to usual "spiritual" thinking, it is not antithetical to us nor really a distraction—that is brought about by our mishandling and misperceiving of it. The plain truth is that when we have gained sufficient interior opening, we will find that by comprehending our life we comprehend ourselves. Our outer life is a mirror of our inner state—and not just in the matter of karma. The entire character and tone of our life indicates the character and inner tone of our state of consciousness. As the Chinese say: "When mean-spirited people live behind the door, mean-spirited people come before the door." When life opposes us, it is because we oppose ourselves. When outer situations make it hard or impossible to accomplish something it is because inwardly we do not want to do so. No one is a victim of life. Life really is what we make it. That is a bitter lesson for the ego, but one we must learn. It is, however, a joyful insight for the spirit, because it means we can transform life by changing ourselves. But it always works from the inside out. That is the first law of harmony. Once we learn that, the others will be rapidly recognized. Therefore, "regard earnestly all the life that surrounds you" for it *is* you. Furthermore, *all* life must be regarded earnestly, not just the part that appeals to us. Everything must be taken into account, for everything is a figure in the ledger book of our life. We will not get the right total if we turn from anything whatsoever. People who refuse to confront or admit the "negative" in their outward life are trying to deny the negativity of their inner life. As I have said before, Positive Thinkers are Positive Stinkers.

**10. Learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men.**

Since we live with people, we must come to comprehend them, to look beyond their outer shell and into their hearts, to see the profound depths that they themselves do not see. Of course both good and bad are there, but we need to see what forces are operating in the hearts of those around us, to realize what is happening to them at the moment, and to understand them. Otherwise we can never really love them as ourselves and thereby heal them. This does not mean that we will passively accept them or think that everything is just fine with them. If they were not in drastic need, God would not send saviors to them, or even come to them Himself. And He intends for us to save them while we are saving ourselves. That is why Jesus says we are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14). Until we face up to that we will get nowhere. Again, saying it is all up to God is nonsense. The Master is preparing us for good sense. So then he says:

**11. Regard most earnestly your own heart.**

**12. For through your own heart comes the one light which can illuminate life and make it clear to your eyes. Study the hearts of men, that you may know what is that world in which you live and of which you will to be a part. Regard the constantly changing and moving life which surrounds you, for it is formed by the hearts of men; and as you learn to understand their constitution and meaning, you will by degrees be able to read the larger word of life.**

*Regard most earnestly your own heart. For through your own heart comes the one*

*light which can illuminate life and make it clear to your eyes.* In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the foundation text of Yoga, self-study (*swadhyaya*) is stated to be a prime requisite. We must soberly and continually watch over our heart. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23), Solomon tells us. Although a lot of junk proceeds from the heart (Matthew 15:19), at the bottom are the wellsprings of spirit. And at bottom "comes the one light which can illuminate life and make it clear to your eyes." We are indeed supposed to see all the ego-rubbish—in the form of both vice and virtue—and acknowledge and deal with it, but we are also to keep on digging and clearing until the light of the One shines forth. "In thy light shall we see light" (Psalms 36:9), sang David. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5), the Beloved Disciple assures us.

*Study the hearts of men, that you may know what is that world in which you live and of which you will to be a part. Regard the constantly changing and moving life which surrounds you, for it is formed by the hearts of men; and as you learn to understand their constitution and meaning, you will by degrees be able to read the larger word of life.* This needs no comment, except it should be pointed out that the Master does not say we are caught in life or thrust into it by forces external to ourselves—not even God. He states flatly that we *will* to be a part of this world. If we do not like our involvement in the world—either the involvement itself or the form it is taking—we need only change our will.

### **13. Speech comes only with knowledge. Attain to knowledge and you will attain to speech.**

Oh, don't we wish that the "teachers" of this world would adopt this principle! And it clues us in as to how people can speak volumes and really say nothing. And some people can remain silent and teach volumes.

"It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite" (Isaiah 29:8). This is also true of most seekers who have come into the orbit of ignorant instructors—especially spiritual ones. No matter how much they cram in lectures, books, and seminars, they remain spiritually starved (or deluded, if they are really unfortunate). By far most "spiritual teachers" speak emptiness from an empty heart.

"Attain to knowledge and you will attain to speech." This is not poetry; I once witnessed this myself. I used to attend a yoga center that had Sunday morning lectures given by two speakers—one remarkably good and the other remarkably poor. They alternated Sundays, and being loyal (I do not know why) I never missed a talk, so I sat through a lot of painfully bad ones. (I even passed up the chance to hear brilliant speakers like Manly Palmer Hall because I would faithfully go to the center no matter what.) Then one Sunday the poor speaker announced that for the next few weeks he would be on a meditation retreat. Happy news! For more than a month I would not suffer through his bumbling talks. But in time the Sunday came when he was going to speak. I fortified myself with determination and went, already squirming. But all was changed. His talk was magnificent. And from then on all his talks were quite good. Obviously he had experienced a spiritual breakthrough in his weeks of meditation, and it affected his speaking ability.

It is our ignorance that we need deliverance from—not from any factors in our environment. Many people like to make excuse about neglecting spiritual life, blaming their spouse, environment, parents, job, economic situation, "society," and whatnot.

But the truth is: we alone are our problem, and we need to be saved from our (false) selves.

**14. Having obtained the use of the inner senses, having conquered the desires of the outer senses, having conquered the desires of the individual soul, and having obtained knowledge, prepare now, O disciple, to enter upon the way in reality. The path is found: make yourself ready to tread it.**

The crucial expression here is *in reality*. Many (most) enter the path in imagination only. I have never heard a person speak of “being on the path” for many years who was not hopelessly caught in his own self-fantasy, far, far away from the possibility of even coming in sight of The Way. Spiritually incompetent people abound, mediocrities who believe they are leaving their bodies nightly for “work on the higher planes,” who believe that through past ages they have been returning to earth again and again to uplift humanity under the aegis of “the Masters;” who yet, if their spiritual brains were nitroglycerin, really could not blow a gnat’s nose. The duller and more backward they are, the more grandiose their delusions. The three reincarnated Jesus Christs I have encountered at least were crazy enough to have strong personalities, whereas these “sheep of the pasture” are just that. The “channelers” have at least found their niche—capable of being nothing more than telephones for discarnates as pointless as themselves.

The Master lists the qualities which are necessary before we can even start to get ready to enter the path. They are:

- 1) development of the inner, psychic senses
- 2) elimination of the desires arising from the outer material senses
- 3) elimination of the desires arising from ego-identity and its resulting erroneous concept of individuality
- 4) possession of true knowledge

These traits are not the marks of saints or liberated beings, they are required just to start getting ready to start on the path. Now, there are multitudes of “ways” we can travel that require none of these things—many demand their opposites. But “the way which leadeth unto life” (Matthew 7:14) cannot be approached without them.

Two principles are implied here that we should not miss. First, only those who have entered the inner world can control their life in the outer world. To badger people to “stop doing that” rather than showing them how to grow beyond “that” is stupid and sadistic. If we cannot show the way beyond—and I do not mean “getting saved” or “giving it all over to the Lord”—then we should leave others alone and find out the way and ourselves get beyond before we presume to advise others. Second, the dissolution of egoic motivations has to occur before knowledge—real knowledge—can be obtained. Information and misinformation we can get in floods—and shall until egotism is eliminated (not just suppressed or put out to pasture). One reason it is hard to find a worthy teacher is the fact that worthy teachers are quiet and humble, never putting themselves forward, and we who are blinded by egotism are incapable of seeing them for what they really are. We usually consider them dull, narrow, and tiresome.

How do we prepare to enter the path? The Master does not leave us guessing.

**15. Inquire of the earth, the air, and the water, of the secrets they hold for you. The development of your inner senses will enable you to do this.**

Whatever we see is but the outermost layer of a vast series of increasingly subtle levels of being. When the inner senses are developed we become able to penetrate into those levels. When the subtlest senses of the causal level are developed we are able to



perceive the ideational level of things, to comprehend them as concepts and to read the basic script of the cosmos. The Master is referring to this. The perceptions that arise before then may be subtle and intriguing, but they yield no “secrets”—no wisdom, only knowledge of phenomena and their manipulation. This is a labyrinth in which we become easily lost and confused, so it is best to keep away from it. Occultism quickly opens this and entices us into exploration that ultimately leads nowhere. We must turn from the phenomena and seek only the meaning of things.

**16. Inquire of the holy ones of the earth of the secrets they hold for you. The conquering of the desires of the outer senses will give you the right to do this.**

Knowledge received without the seeker first being established in spiritual consciousness can be detrimental. For the ego eagerly grasps at whatever it can use to assert itself and extend its dominion. When all desire for the outer levels has been eliminated—not just suppressed or controlled—only then is higher knowledge safe for us. “The holy ones of the earth” are multiform. Some are enlightened human beings, some are guardian spirits of earth life, some are the patterns of earthly existence—blueprints of creative forces. Others are the states of awareness inherent in earthly phenomena. In this inquiry the nature of all things as pure consciousness is revealed and the seeker begins to realize and manifest that truth. It is this attainment which enables a person to change water to wine, move mountains, and alter the patterns of life which we call birth, disease, and death. It is the expansion into omniscience and omnipotence. Still, this is all outer-oriented, however subtle or glorious. So the Master continues:

**17. Inquire of the inmost, the one, of its final secret which it holds for you through the ages.**

**The great and difficult victory, the conquering of the desires of the individual soul, is a work of ages; therefore expect not to obtain its reward until ages of experience have been accumulated. When the time of learning this seventeenth rule is reached, man is on the threshold of becoming more than man.**

The final secret is perfect Self-knowledge and Self-manifestation. It transcends all that has gone before. It is the revelation of the Eternal which negates the temporal forever. To say more would be to cloud the matter.

Now the Master would caution those who think that the mere willing will guarantee the attaining. Their enthusiasm, if indulged, will in time turn to disgust and disbelief, for it is based on a mistaken view both of themselves and the goal. The prime error is the conviction that enlightenment is at hand for the picking up. Just wish for it...and it is yours. So he tells us: “The great and difficult victory, the conquering of the desires of the individual soul, is a work of ages; therefore expect not to obtain its reward until ages of experience have been accumulated. When the time of learning this seventeenth rule is reached, man is on the threshold of becoming more than man.”

He is giving us a dual message. Only after many ages can the final victory be won. Therefore we must have the experience of ages before we can engage in that final battle. However, we would not learn this truth unless we already had accumulated most of it. And that fact tells us that we are even now “on the threshold of becoming more than man.”

We have come a long way together in this commentary. Consequently I am going to end by relaying to you the final words of the Master without comment, for they cannot

be illumined by more words. Simply read and understand.

**18. The knowledge which is now yours is only yours because your soul has become one with all pure souls and with the inmost. It is a trust vested in you by the Most High. Betray it, misuse your knowledge, or neglect it, and it is possible even now for you to fall from the high estate you have attained. Great ones fall back, even from the threshold, unable to sustain the weight of their responsibility, unable to pass on. Therefore look forward always with awe and trembling to this moment, and be prepared for the battle.**

**19. It is written that for him who is on the threshold of divinity no law can be framed, no guide can exist. Yet to enlighten the disciple, the final struggle may be thus expressed:**

**Hold fast to that which has neither substance nor existence.**

**20. Listen only to the voice which is soundless.**

**21. Look only on that which is invisible alike to the inner and outer sense.**

**PEACE BE WITH YOU.**